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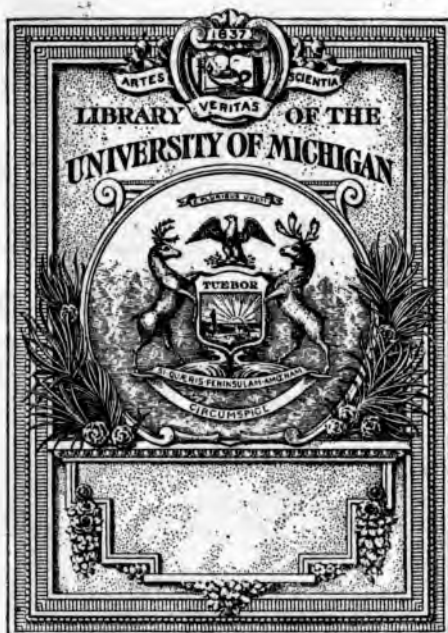
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JESUS
AND
MODERN RELIGION
BY
EDWIN A. RUMBALL

CHRISTIANITY OF TO-DAY SERIES



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JESUS AND MODERN RELIGION

BY
EDWIN A. RUMBALL

"And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day."
—Gen. i. 5.

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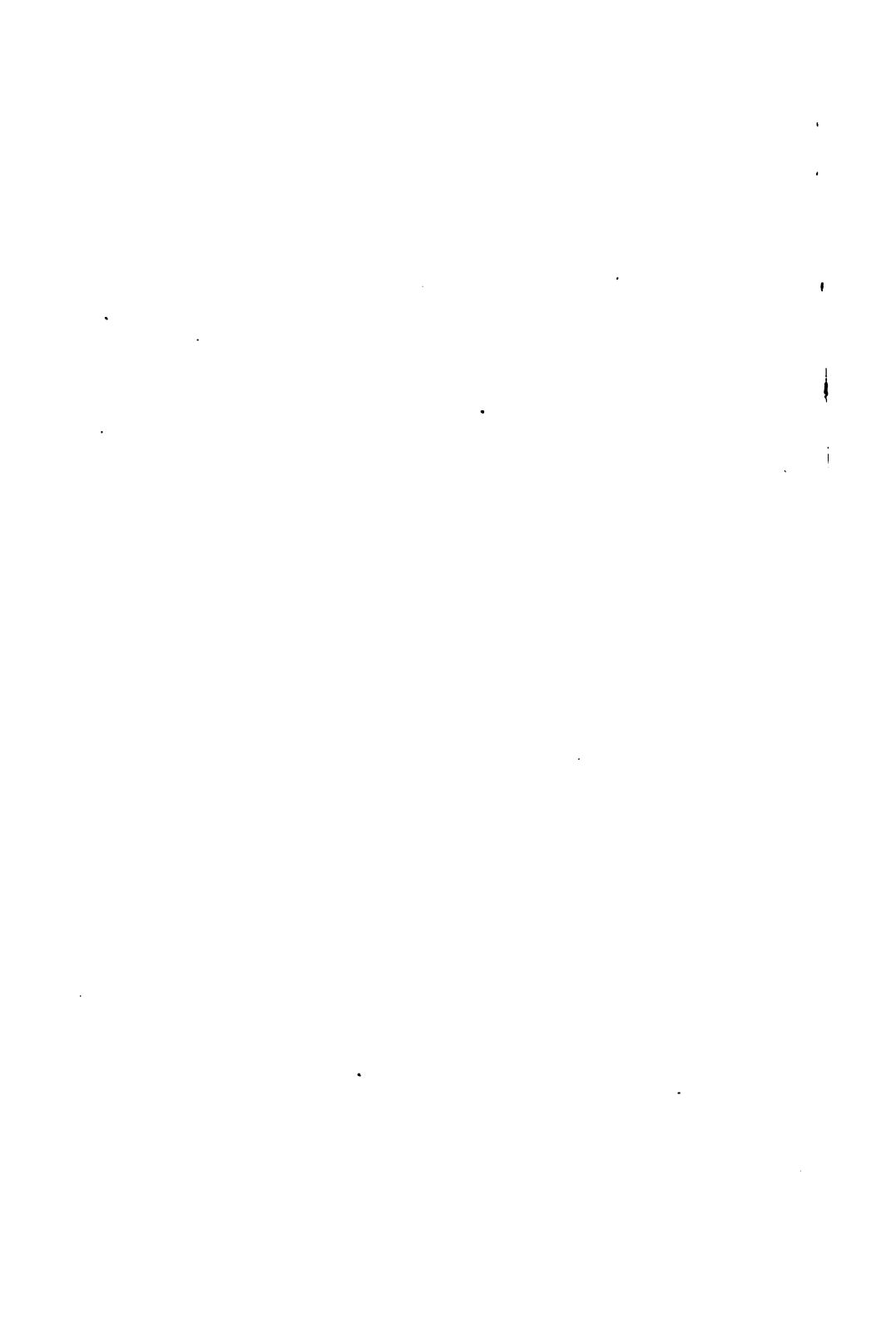
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THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO
My Wife
MY CHEERFUL COMPANION FROM
DARKNESS TO LIGHT

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INTRODUCTION.

I have chosen the form of an introduction as a suitable means of writing some things which are too fragmentary for chapters and which, to some extent, are explanatory of the positions maintained in the book.

As I have hinted in my dedication, the studies which are here gathered together have a certain biographical interest to the writer. I am anxious that this personal note shall be remembered until the last page is reached.

The studies have been prosecuted only in the search for truth, but no dogmatic claim is made that all of that truth has been found. Here are presented only the findings of one man.

Like large numbers of orthodox divinity students, the writer left his theological school with some assurance and confidence in the faith delivered to him to preach. This confidence was not lessened, but considerably increased, when he gained a first-class certificate in a competitive examination upon the general evidences of Christianity, from the Christian Evidence Society, of Eng-

land, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury. If ever man felt invulnerable to the doubts and heresies that "afflict" mankind, none did so more than the writer. With such arms as might be drawn from Butler, Paley and Godet, I was ready for any attack that might come from such men as David Strauss, Herbert Spencer or Thomas Cheyne.

Quietly and steadily however as I sought to live the good life, I found that my doubts were not coming from Germany or Oxford, but from myself, and as far as I could judge from the very best in myself. They, indeed, seemed at times to be the effects of spiritual growth. To warn my soul that they might be devils in the garments of glory was useless, for my soul was being flooded with a light that only could originate in God. I was doubting because I was beginning to believe, my unbelief was but an aspect of greater moral convictions.

Often I was tempted to pursue a fleeing error for the sake of some sentiment and old association. My ultimate relation to it, however, was always that of courage. If anything was false it had to go, even if the whole universe of love and hope should go out of my life. This result, however, was never fully anticipated, for it was felt that the universe, in spite of many seeming

contradictions, was so organized that the highest things would be ultimately vindicated. In this faith—for it was of the nature of faith—has the journey been taken. The constant calls of a busy parish life on sea and land have often interrupted the earnestness of the search, but never has the path been left.

It will be noticed that frequently in the course of the book the figures of darkness and light have been employed. Only after we had used them two or three times half-unconscious of our repetition of the same figure, did we discover that in the realm of religion these were favorite emblems of all nations. Max Müller tells us that for some old and savage nations who saw God in the Dawn, “it dawns” meant, “I love”. The suggestion does not give us the full noonday of truth, but it does grant to our view a few golden streaks rising above the hills of time. That the dawn and love are one is our hope, and while we move here in the darkness, often doubting, often fearing, often despairing, we do not want to lose our faith in the Dawn. We are conscious of the “riddle of the universe”, but believe in the existence of an unknown solution. We believe this because we are evolutionists and thus unable to think that it is given even to the thinkers of the twentieth century to answer all our questions. Thus while

we at present simply see darkness, damnation and death, we are wise enough to believe that when the everlasting hills, to which we often cast our eyes, are glorious in the sunshine of the morning of God's long day, these valleys will be full of light, love and life.

The criticism that the book will cause pain to many good souls, and wound many a sacred sentiment, I may, perhaps, be able to anticipate. Had it been possible to avoid touching the sacred sentiments of the religion of some it would have been done; but the subject proposed and the object sought did not admit such a possibility. I have no quarrel with any, but every desire that each man shall follow his own judgments and rest on his own decisions. A man cannot leave his error because someone else sees the truth; he must see it for himself. Whatever is, is right for him until a better becomes possible; only then, the "whatever is" becomes wrong.

I have tried to dispute as little as possible, although such a book as this offers many opportunities for contention. The man who has seen the light and who is following the truth and who knows from his own experience the stony path and dreary way, the bitter tears and fearful heart often possessed by those who travel from a sincere orthodoxy to the free life of goodness, does not

desire to spend his strength in raving against those whom he has left behind on the road. We are not here to call each other names, but to live that life of hope and good-will which throughout the world, under every name and sign, cheers the long watches of the night.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILD OF HIS AGE.

"A man is more the child of his age than of his parents."—

Chinese Proverb.

"The genius of our life is jealous of individuals, and will not have any individual great, except through the general."—

R. W. Emerson.

Any reminder of the subject of this chapter may seem needless to many who have thought themselves free from the fictions which the Christian ages have cast around the figure of Jesus. The following two facts, however, seem to justify the reminder: that many through carelessness of thought or through an overstrong regard for the sentiment of others, yet perpetuate, by a confusing use of old terms, a false conception of Jesus; and the further fact that some accept the fiction and use Jesus in a poetical way. Such a course often leads to forgetfulness of the fact that the good we draw from a fiction does not justify it. "A pious fiction is still a fiction."¹

Those who, holding a brief for Christianity, tell us that Jesus was "free from the impress of the environment in the midst of which he was born and educated,"² naturally make the four

¹Amiel, *Journal Intime*. ²Row's *Manual of Christian Evidences*, ch. 3, p. 63, (11th edit).

gospels the basis of their claim. Even making, however, the impossible assumption³ that these records contain a faithful account of Jesus and his work, they do not seem to contain any adequate evidence of freedom from the influences of his surroundings. On the contrary, we shall here show how much there is that is fatal to such a claim.

For the sake of the sentiment of some it should be remembered that if it shall be shown that Jesus was the child of his age, it will be nothing derogatory to his character. We shall be the gainers if it can be seen that his life was lived upon the same plane of experience as our own.

From all recent studies of the birth of Jesus,⁴ unhampered by traditional preconceptions it is evident that he was the true child of a normal Jewish home. Basing our statements on all true human experience we might say that years ago, in far-away Galilee, two people looked into each others eyes and were made one. After enjoying the love and quiet of their village home for a year or more, they became partakers of the holy joy that rises in every human heart when one little voice and then others lisp the words, "father,

³Cf. P. W. Schmiedel's article "Gospels," *En. Biblica*; II, 1761.

⁴See especially P. Lobstein's *Virgin Birth of Christ*.

mother''; and among these children was one they called Jesus.

Born a Jew, we naturally look for characteristics that will link him with his people. A brief, unprejudiced survey of the records will disclose many likenesses to his people and age.

The political oppression of Rome, and earlier, of other world-powers had produced in the Jewish character an ultra-patriotism. Their love for their country meant intense hatred towards all other peoples. This intensity may be accounted for by the fact that there was no clear distinction between their patriotism and their religion.⁵

In Jesus this characteristic is found. It is true that he tried to teach his countrymen that they were to love their enemies,⁶ but he himself finds it very hard to lay aside the feeling. Only reluctantly does he take the children's bread and give it to "the dogs" of the Gentiles. The consciousness he had of his mission does not extend beyond those whom he thought "the lost sheep of the house of Israel".⁸ This same national limitation of vision re-appears when he instructs his disciples to go not among the heathen, nor into

⁵"Religion was patriotism," says Wellhausen.

⁶ ἐχθρούς. ⁷Matt. xv: 26. No talk about "κυράριους" meaning "petted pups" (Weymouth's *N. T. Modern Speech*), will reduce the harshness of the word. ⁸Matt. xv: 24.

any Samaritan town.⁹ He bore in this matter an impress from his environment that he did not succeed in shaking off. As we shall see in a later chapter,¹⁰ the early Christians felt this inconsistency between the lesson and the teacher, and therefore sought to embody their ideas of what should have been, in the post-resurrection behests to go and teach all nations.

The Gospels lead us also to suppose that he was a poor man and that he drew his disciples from what is called, the working class. Much as some rationalists¹¹ have felt it necessary to attribute to him a liberal education, there is nothing in the records to lead us to suppose he had anything more than the average village education of that day. Although often called Rabbi, Rabbinism seems foreign both to his nature and his teaching.

Being reared, therefore, in a simple village atmosphere, and in manhood's years working and mixing with fishermen and others of the working classes, we naturally expect if he was a child of his age, to discover a plebeian element in his philosophy of life. This characteristic the records make no attempt to hide from us.

Never having lived with the rich or been in a

⁹ibid. x 5. ¹⁰"An Early Christian Symbol," ch. 3. ¹¹E. g. Paulus, exeget. Handb. I. 275ff.

position to appreciate their standpoint, he naturally declares that money, luxury and comfort are things to avoid. His blessing is for the poor man, his woe for the wealthy.¹² The rich man can hardly enter the Kingdom of God of which he dreams, indeed, in some instances can only do so, by selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.¹³ In his "Kingdom of God" earth's conditions are reversed and while the poor man is comforted, Dives suffers torment.¹⁴ He tells the poor people, who eagerly listen to him, that a man's life does not consist in the things which he hath.¹⁵ Had he, however, received no impress from his environment, he would not have thus played to the prejudices of the poor, he would rather have also reminded them that a man's life did not consist even in the possessions he lacked. Being, however, the child of his age and thus limited, as other men, this impartial declaration was impossible to him. He shared the views of many leaders of popular Jewish opinion, that God was on the side of the poor, and an enemy of the rich.¹⁶ The natural historical result of this attitude of Jesus is to be seen in the so-called heresy of Ebionism and in the more mod-

¹²Lk. vi: 20, 24. ¹³Mk. x: 21. ¹⁴Lk. xvi: 25. ¹⁵Lk. xii: 15.

¹⁶Cf. the good though over-poetical study in Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, ch. xi.

ern fact that in all lands where Christian missionaries go, the rich and cultured classes are not drawn to Christianity as are the poor and ignorant.

In few things does Jesus show himself more the child of his age than in his general theory of the universe. His "world-view" is, like that of his day, both limited and crude.

From such literature as is represented by the Book of Enoch, Jesus inherited many strange Messianic and eschatological ideas. Not alone at that period, but perhaps more than others, he feels that he is the long expected Messiah. With this consciousness of his exceptional office there is united a belief that after his death he will return to his disciples. He allows this consciousness of uniqueness to so rule his simple enthusiastic mind that he looks for all manner of supernatural things in his favor. The whole universe is subordinated to his fancy. A modern Dowie did not hypnotize himself more than did Jesus in regard to these matters of eschatology.

We are, however, not to blame him that he did not anticipate the conceptions of Copernicus, Newton and Darwin, rather do we blame those who speak of him as if he had, who, for the sake of dogmas, have tried to isolate him and make

him independent of the influences which formed him.

In his teaching he clearly shows that we can find a place for him in the evolution of civilization. To him God is a Father¹⁷ and heaven is a place "above the bright blue sky", a place where he will drink of the fruit of the vine¹⁸ and his disciples dine with the patriarchs.¹⁹ The earth is God's foot-stool, which he will one day destroy. There is to be a future judgment when account shall be given for every careless word, and his disciples shall sit on thrones as judges.²⁰ Little children have angels who always behold the face of God.²¹ Diseases are the work of Satan²² or some evil spirit. Satan is to him a real personage of whom he sometimes has visions.²³ The mere mention of these things without any literary adornment will suggest to our minds an age and thought which without a doubt belongs to a dead past.

Before closing this chapter it will be well to point out the impossibility and uselessness of a catholic man, a child of all ages.

In the light of all we know of the progress of mankind, there is no place for one who can be

¹⁷This was a popular word for God at that time, cf. Dalman *Words of Jesus*, vi. ¹⁸Lk. xxii: 18. ¹⁹Lk. xiii: 29.

²⁰Matt. xix: 28. ²¹Matt. xviii: 10. ²²Lk. xiii: 16. ²³Matt. iv: 3.

the contemporary of all ages. Schiller may write his *Wilhelm Tell* without even seeing Switzerland, and Jules Verne may compass the universe without ever leaving France, but no man can deposit himself thousands of years ahead of his day, under new conditions and in unheard-of lands and be the spiritual leader of all the ages. But, that we may not confuse our minds with arguments regarding what is possible to such a person as Jesus claimed to be, we pass to ask a saner question. Wherein is the necessity for such a historic manifestation of the ultimate ideal?

We used to be told that God's revelation of Himself was the Bible; criticism has disposed of this fallacy only to be faced by another, namely, that the light of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. Of recent years, therefore, it is the revelation of Jesus upon which we are asked to depend. A recent liberal outline of Christian theology,²⁴ says distinctly that "the heart of what we call the Christian revelation is Christ". In each statement of this attitude the implication is that the revelation is final and infallible. But is such an infallible revelation of God necessary? is it in harmony with what we know of God's

²⁴ W. N. Clarke's *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 12. (12th Edit.)

action in other spheres than the growth of personal goodness?

That it is unnecessary for us to possess in history an ideal man is patent to all who consider that God ever makes *Himself* the object of our strivings. Some different and higher aspect of God is the ideal of each successive age. "Whatever else we consider about man we must add * * * that he is an ideal-forming animal",²⁵ and thus needs not that one should in history be formed for his example.

That it is inadequate for the needs of man, supposing he needed such a manifestation, is evident the moment we remember the necessary limitations of such an ideal appearing in history. All who lived previous to his manifestation would die ignorant of him. Millions of his contemporaries would never see or hear of him. After his departure, the possibility of his being known would be dependent upon careful and hard research, a wading through many intricate historical problems, only in the end to hold a very uncertain prize.

"Comes faint and far thy voice, from vales
of Galilee,
The vision fades in ancient shades, how should
we follow thee?"²⁶

²⁵J. Grote, *Treat. Moral Ideals*, p. 392. (1876.) ²⁶F. T. Palgrave.

The clear judgment of men to-day is, that if Jesus was meant by God to be the contemporary of all ages, He has strangely failed to preserve him for our day. All that we possess of his life would fill but a week or two, and little as this is, it is all conflicting and untrustworthy. Surely such an ideal, however adequate for Galilee in A. D. 30, is altogether dissatisfactory for to-day! Such a method of leading us on to the eternal life is altogether out of keeping with what we know of God's ways. He has given us no historical ideal in politics, art, literature or music, and we may as well open our eyes to the truth and see that He has not presented us with one of righteousness.

The feeling for the necessity for such an ideal belongs to those dark theological days when it was strangely believed that man instead of being an "ideal-forming animal", was only an animal with a lost soul. If we have ceased to believe in "total depravity", we are logically bound to give up our notion that we need a historic manifestation of the perfect will of God in one life.

The infinite life is given wholly to no one; the emphasis needed for each element of that life makes such a gift unthinkable. Rather does our experience confirm the poet,

"That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,"

for all lives in all ages add their share to the erection of an ideal which in the fullest sense shall be the manifestation of God to man. Never appearing wholly in flesh, it shall be infinite and perfectly good. God shines on the prism of mankind and each individual is as a spectrum, emphasizing in limitation some power or beauty of the Infinite Light. No one individual gathers up in himself all the beauties of that Light, and no one is "cast as rubbish to the void", but, hand in hand, brethren, all, we let our light shine.

CHAPTER II.

A BY-GONE LEADER.

"The man has not lived who can feed us ever."—*R. W. Emerson*
"The historical man Jesus is not and has long ceased to be the
one leader in the religious life and progress of mankind."—
C. F. Dole.

About half a century ago a strong movement began in the Christian Divinity schools which had for its watchword the cry, "Back to Christ". It was significant of a great deal, particularly of a diminishing interest in systematic theology. Men desired personalities above abstractions, practice more than precept. The manner in which earnest seekers of truth had found, not only systematic theology but also the Bible, wanting, compelled them to concentrate their attention upon Jesus. Jesus came to take up a new position in theology, in fact, he became a theology in himself. No longer was a passage in the Gospels to receive modification from a passage in the Epistles, for Jesus had become the interpreter of the whole Bible, and his words were enthroned far above all others. It is evident to all observers to-day that this movement was the result of historical criticism. "We feel him more in our theology", wrote one, "because we know him better in history." "The old theology came to history

through doctrine, but the new comes to doctrine through history.”¹

The watchword, however, is already becoming old and it is evident that Christocentric systems are becoming fewer. The criticism which caused this movement was imperfect and unfinished, it had hardly begun to touch the figure around which the new theologians had gathered. Men have obeyed the cry and have gone back to Christ, but already we see them returning. “What went ye into Galilee to see?” “The Incarnate Only Son of God,” the orthodox answers; and the Unitarian replies, “The Prophet of Nazareth.” They had gone disputing on the nature of the object of their quest, they are returning hand in hand. They both tell us that some good thing *may* have come out of Nazareth years ago, but to-day there is no evidence that is trustworthy. And to every pilgrim going east whom they meet, they say, “He is not there; progress is not made in going back to any one, however good, come onward with us”. The watchword is already in our ears, full of hope, full of truth, and thus full of power, “Back to none, but on with God”.

Although we have again recently heard it said that Jesus was not a historical person,² we see

¹Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 3. (10th Edit.)

²Cf. Prof. W. B. Smith's *Der vorchristliche Jesus*. (1907.)

no sufficient reason at present for granting it. Small as is our evidence, it at least seems to indicate that he was a leader in days gone by, and it is the purpose here to show some of the reasons for denying to him the leadership of the *modern* good life. It will be seen that Jesus, apart from his not desiring to be the Bread of Life³ for all ages, is hindered from being such by his character, condition and ideals.

Although the character of Jesus as it is given us in the Gospels contains much that can form a nucleus for the ideals of admiring followers, there are also elements which are repellent and altogether undesirable in the modern ideals that we form for ourselves. It is customary to omit these undesirable, crude and abnormal elements from our every-day conception of his character, but if we are to form a just estimate of him, they must be recalled.

That which first calls for our attention is the lack of balance in his life. Religion, as he understands it, must be all in all. His, is the character of the missionary, the man who sees one great thing and sees it vividly, and who is restless till all see it as he does. The vision of Jesus is of a supernatural kingdom where all shall be right-

³It must be remembered that the Johannine Christ is an Ideal, cf. ch. iii.

eous. None but admit⁴ that it is a grand vision, but the emphasis it receives from him, throws all other visions into the background. Righteousness is only one element in the ideal of a perfect life and while it may be attractive to those whose dispositions are akin to Jesus', it can be repellent to more balanced lives by its ultra-emphasis. Jesus' way of reaching the human soul is only one way, he is not as the early Christian thought the *only* way, the truth and the life.⁵ To-day we "come unto the Father" by other ways, by other truths, by other lives. To the early Christian it may have seemed that such comers were "thieves and robbers", but the fact that we find the Father and seek to do His will is sufficient for most to-day to justly affirm that their "climbing up some other way"⁶ was right and good. One comes to the Father by way of literature, another by art, another by music. The highest things in many good lives to-day, are these things which Jesus never mentions. One recent writer⁷ has strikingly noted the contrast between Jesus of Nazareth and his own consciousness of God. As a religious soul he visits the great English cathedrals and feasts on the peaceful, refreshing majesty

⁴Except perhaps such as Nietzsche, who tells us that virtue must be freed from "moralic acid;" and that "morality is the negation of life", cf. citations in Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, ch. v. ⁵John xiv: 6. ⁶John x: 1f. ⁷A. C. Benson, *Upton Letters*, 88.

of those works of art. "And then there falls a darker, more bewildering, thought. Suppose that one could bring one of the rough Galilean fishermen who sowed the seed of the faith, into a place like this, and say to him, 'This is the fruit of your teaching; you, whose Master never spoke a word of art or music, who taught poverty and simplicity, bareness of life and an unclouded heart, you are honored here; these towers and bells are called after your names; you stand in gorgeous robes in these storied windows'? Would they not think and say it was all a terrible mistake? Would they not say that the desire of the world, the lust of the eye and ear had laid subtle and gentle hands on a stern and rugged creed, and bade it serve and be bound?" Certainly, they would, for there is nothing in common between these esthetic joys and the stern alternatives of Jesus. "And yet," adds this writer, "I somehow feel that God is in these places and that, if only the heart is pure and the will strong, such influences can minister to the growth of the meek and loving spirit." The manna from heaven is here also and the frozen music of architecture and the melting music of sound together contribute to the eternal life. He who sees life steadily and sees it whole will need to turn his eyes very often away

from Jesus for he does not touch the whole life of man.

The emphasis which Jesus seems to have given to the religious side of his nature accounts for many other things that prevent him from being the leader of religious life to-day. Such religiosity always results in fanaticism, for this is the only name we can give many of his religious extravagances. This is not only seen in his nights of prayer on mountains, but in the strange claims he made for himself, in the aloofness that impresses all who read his sayings. His claim to be the Messiah, his anticipation of a supernatural return, his manner of addressing his fellows as from some high plane of experience⁸ are all the fruit of abnormal religious growth.

These extravagances are in keeping with other hints of abnormality that we have in the Gospels. He is subject to strange visions, which never come to healthy minds. He sees "Satan fall as lightning from heaven",⁹ and is driven by some spirit into a wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Once, during his ministry, his friends seek to restrain him, because they think he is "beside himself",¹⁰ and his enemies charge him with working his cures by the aid of some evil spirit.¹¹

⁸E. g. Matt. xi: 25-27. ⁹Lk. x: 18. ¹⁰Mk. iii: 21, 35.

¹¹Mk. iii: 22.

It hardly needs to be said that such a life is far removed from the healthy, sane ideals we make for ourselves to-day. It belongs to the dark, superstitious ages when men's minds were in subjection to weird, crude notions, when, as is seen in Francis of Assisi, the zeal and fervor for religion overlaps the borderland of sanity. True, indeed, is the word that "truth is an element of life; yet, if a man fastens his attention upon a single aspect of truth and apply himself to that alone for a long time, the truth becomes distorted and not itself, but falsehood".¹² In so far as Jesus has not seen life whole, so far does he fail us.

To proceed farther in our endeavor to show how ill-adapted Jesus is for our modern ideal we must notice that his life was unlike anything we know in our modern civilization. Had he remained a carpenter, we might have gained a more natural example, but, as it is, every modern mechanic loses him in the prophet; we do not know anything of Jesus, the carpenter. His life is not tied down to some trade, "the trivial round and common task". These do not furnish him with his road on which to travel daily nearer God. His life is free, free not only from restraint, but from all the petty affairs of an average man's life.

¹²Emerson, *Essays*.

Renan once called in the aid of his poetical genius and revealed to us the entrancing beauty of this manner of life. The simple loveliness of the picture, however, was of no moral value to us, it was too far removed and in some of its features, the living of such a life to-day would be cowardly and foolish. Jesus is free from all home cares and is wholly absorbed in the personal and spiritual. We may look back upon it as upon some pleasant dream, but it is not for us to realize it by forsaking our wives, our homes and our little ones.

Jesus never expected there would be a civilization like the present. To him the world was a doomed world and it would pass away in a very few years. The missionary journeys of the disciples through the towns of Israel would not have been completed,¹³ the generation then living would not have passed away,¹⁴ before the gloomy dark forecasts of Jesus concerning the world would have begun to be fulfilled. This pessimistic outlook modifies the whole of his teaching. It takes all value out of all life other than the life of discipleship in the narrow sense in which he understood it. It is no time for saving money for future emergencies, for to him there is no future. The comforts of life are no longer necessary and are

¹³Matt. x: 23. ¹⁴Matt. xxiv: 34.

to be surrendered in that they tempt away from the hard life Jesus is trying to live. It is no time for hesitating, a man must follow now or not at all. There is no time to bury a father, not even time to bid farewell to those at home. Family ties are nothing compared to the living of this fanatical religious life, and therefore they are all broken. The fact that our earliest calendar of saints contains no apostle living the good life with wife and children is a serious loss. Peter deserts his wife and her mother to follow Jesus, and one cannot forbear asking the practical question, what happened to Peter's wife when no more fish were caught and thus no money brought home?

It is here again where Jesus fails. All the explanations and interpretations of theologians and apologists sound weak and pitiful to the man who yearly sees the divorce that is taking place between Christianity and the working classes of our modern civilization.¹⁵ He is cut off from their lives. The father and mother of to-day obtain little from him. He was no father, and unmarried and what is more unfortunate, he seems, like Paul, to deprecate marriage. "Our fragmentary

¹⁵In London, Eng., only 22 per cent. of the population—and these chiefly women—go to church. Cf. P. Vivian *Churches and Modern Thought*, p. 14ff. (Watts & Co., London.)

record of his sayings does not tell us whether he ever suggested that men might marry, and women bear children, and parents bring up little ones for the kingdom of heaven"; and those who wish to preserve Jesus as a leader and ideal, cry out from their hearts, "Would that it did!"¹⁶

Before closing this chapter, we will draw attention to one other fact which is often overlooked in the churches and Christian homes of to-day, namely, that all the sayings which our Gospels attribute to Jesus had an immediate reference. There is no promise in the Gospels for anyone living to-day. Once we perceive that Jesus looked for no such civilization like the present, we shall realize that we wrong him in approaching his words as oracles true for all time. It was only the incidental and occasional that called forth his utterances. He did not possess a systematic theology, and there is no evidence that he thought out his message before delivering it, his words bear all the marks of being uttered on the spur of the moment. His enthusiastic nature did not permit him to reconcile the message of one moment with that given some days previously. He does not seek to be consistent, such natures as his never do, they are only true to the feelings of the present. Only from such a person could we

¹⁶N. Schmidt *Prophet of Nazareth*.

obtain the attractive picture of a God who "had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him", and of one who sternly says, "Depart", into a hell "where the fire is not quenched, and the worm dieth not". He has no patience, he will not argue with his opponents, he annihilates them. He does not gently lead home his Father's sheep to the fold, but sets before them stern alternatives. "He could speak harsh, biting words which were apt to offend and wound his hearers. * * * He was fond of exhibiting things in all their forbidding harshness, one-sidedness and crudity. Who can reproach him for it? A prophet cannot always be a pedagogue as well."¹⁷ Granted, but we of to-day, who have already tasted of the good things of our Father, and have seen the need there is for many of God's children being led gently home, and not driven by "harsh, biting words", do not feel that we want a prophet for our ideal. We look to find this ideal in no one life. "He belongs to no single nation, or color, or race or religion."¹⁸ It is not manliness alone, it is not womanliness alone, but a noble combination of strength and tenderness. He is what we all try to become and the path to the realization of our better selves will

¹⁷Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 32.

¹⁸C. F. Dole, *The Human Christ*.

be our own path, not another's; our truth our own, our life our own. Forgetting those things which are behind we press forward by the faith which is the conviction of the reality of the unseen, to the Invisible Leader, our God and Father.

CHAPTER III.

AN EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOL.

"You, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for yourselves."—*Trypho*.

"A fiction, although not undesigned, may still be without evil design."—*D. F. Strauss*.

All men are poets. The dry, hard facts of history are seldom allowed in the minds of men to remain as such. The more popular a history becomes, the more romantic it will be; and, on the other hand, the added romance increases its popularity. In consequence of this, there enters into our thinking two kinds of truth, poetical truth and historical; the one in harmony with ideal conceptions, the other in accordance with historic facts. The former is ever a protest against the latter, a hope for something better. The ideal truth is the leaven of the future, working in the unsatisfactory present. We always see the possible man beneath the actual man. For such reasons as these an incarnation is always a limitation, and a limitation never satisfies the mind of man. He who loves, always has some element of his love that he cannot tell. Thus, speech becomes "an art for hiding thought,"¹

¹F. W. Robertson's *Sermons* I, p. 48.

“For words, like nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.”²

The statue always falls short of the vision of the great sculptor; the canvas never tells all the beauties the artist saw in his mind. The infinite we are, ever tends in this world to discontent.³

Although this poetical faculty seems universal with man, oriental peoples are more in its power than western peoples. We are naturally realists rather than romancists, at heart we demand fact not fiction. In the East a fiction will carry with it all the value that we give to a fact. It gains by being a fancy.

The moment we enter early Christian days we find ourselves in the dreamland of fancy. Imagination is called largely into use to formulate what the Christian thinks of his Christ. In the early representations of the face of Jesus we have striking examples of the subjective ideals of Christian holiness. They had reacted on the Greek ideals of beauty and good form as tending towards sensuality, thus to them the holiest man must have a sad, marred, wretched face. True to their conception, Jesus appears in these early pictures exceedingly unattractive and even repulsive. This process of making Jesus a sym-

²Tennyson “*In Mem.*” v.

³Cf. Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, ix.

bol, an embodiment of their ideals, was applied to the whole of his life. Their first question was always, "what do *you* think Jesus was like?" it never was the historical inquiry, "what was he like?"

Of the facts of the life of Jesus, the average Christian of those days, knew less than we do. To some extent it was the meagerness of their traditions of him, that led to their filling up the lacunæ. It must be remembered that very often their legends regarding Jesus registered for all time the heights of their religious conceptions and feelings. The idealizing process was of a religious nature. This needs to be emphasized because we matter-of-fact Occidentals are too hasty to make the charge of evil design. In a large number of instances the legend-builders may have had no thought of deception. They would, in their simplicity, persuade themselves that their work would be accepted in the spirit in which it was accomplished, that men would gauge it only as its poetical value. To every student of early Christian literature it is only too evident that literary ethics were a very different thing from what they are to-day.⁴ Each legend was a work

⁴Cf. e. g. The Confession of Eusebius, Ecc. Hist. viii, ch. 2, par. 2.

of love, full of an ideal value, though worthless as history.⁵

It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate some of the workings of this process, by which the young Jewish teacher became the early Christian symbol of the absolute Life; perfect and complete. In our previous studies we have seen no adequate reason for doubting that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah;⁶ in any case, the first generation of disciples so thought of him. In the absence of any adequate materials from which to form a story of his life, the early disciples filled up the gap with stories of those things which to a Jewish mind the Messiah was supposed to do. Many a predictive looking passage in the Old Testament provided a basis for such an imaginary history; and where the canonical Scriptures proved insufficient, there was all around them a mass of popular Messianic expectancies, which gave the disciples ample material for an elaborate story of a wonder-

⁵Doubtless the writer of the 4th Gospel, if he knew that his book was accepted by some as history would be as surprised, (and more so,) as would be H. G. Wells at one of his works being thus accepted. ⁶I have read Schmidt's article in the *Enc. Biblica*, on the "Son of Man," and also his more recent *Prophet of Nazareth*, but though finding his theory attractive, especially in some of its applications, I remain unconvinced.

ful life.⁷ Most of these legends would seem to the early Christian as having actually happened. That he was not in a position to verify the fulfilment of a so-called prophecy, did not at all disconcert him. It was inconceivable to him that what had been foretold should not take place. In fact, he would be more likely to trust the prediction as coming from his God than any tradition he might hear from an old disciple. Thus we may take it as a rule that wherever in the Gospels, it is written, that anything happened or was spoken to "fulfil" some so-called prophecy, we are in the presence of poetry, not fact. "Every-trait in the image of the Messiah, as sketched by the popular expectation, was attributed with necessary or gratuitous modifications to Jesus; nay, the imagination, once stimulated, invented new characteristics."⁸ As instances belonging to the Messianic feature of this process we might briefly mention the following: At the dawn of the story we find the birth of Jesus at David's City of Bethlehem. If Micah had not mentioned this

⁷Legends can grow the day after a man's death. Cf. e. g. Sabatier's *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*; also Harnack's *What is Christianity?* Lecture 2. ⁸Strauss, *Life of Jesus*; (Trans. G. Eliot, 5th Edit.) ii, §145. For detailed and keen criticism of the life of Jesus, as given in the Gospels, Strauss is yet unsurpassed. We have changed some of our methods, but the results are the same.

place with a seeming Messianic reference, we should never have found it in connection with Jesus.⁹ The Talmud doubtless represents the popular expectancy of the day when it also affirms that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem. The legend of a virgin birth is doubtless due to many influences. Mythology gave its contribution and although the idea is foreign to Judaism, a semi-Judaic influence may have come through Philo,¹⁰ but what is more to our purpose here, its origin may be found, as Pfeiderer has pointed out, in the Pauline Messianic idea of "the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness".¹¹ The resuscitation of the dead was also expected of the Messiah at his coming,¹² and the two or three instances mentioned in the Gospels show how the want of facts to meet this expectancy was filled up. The tradition that Jesus said he would work no miracle for the people¹³ does not seem to have disturbed this work of idealization.

Another factor which brought fresh significance to this early Christian symbol was the desire to give to Jesus, in comparison with Old Testament saints and heroes, the pre-eminence. If to them he was the Messiah, it was by no means an unnatural desire that he should far exceed in char-

⁹See Prof. Usener's article "Nativity," *Enc. Biblica* 3347, §12.

¹⁰De cherub. 13; I. 180f. ¹¹Rom. i; 4. I Cor. xv. 45f.

¹²Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus* ii, §100. ¹³Mark viii: 11, 12.

acter and action all who had come before him. If Moses and Elijah worked miracles, so, also, must Jesus; those who are his inferiors in office must not be his superiors in the performance of miracles. In many of the Gospel miracles it is possible to trace the Old Testament background.¹⁴ As in the previous feature of this process the first to tell of these wonders were persons who felt that they possessed a large probability of truth on their side. It was altogether unthinkable that Jesus should do works less wonderful than the prophets of the past, in fact, it is evident that they felt that only by such wonders could his claims be substantiated. It did not occur to them to doubt his claims, they therefore supplied to his life all the proofs those claims seemed to require.

A third factor which must be taken into consideration is that which was hinted at the outset of the chapter, namely, the attempt to harmonize the historical man with the ideal they had gradually formed in their minds. The ideal of which we are now thinking was formed, apart from the influences already mentioned, by influences largely exterior to Judaism. As the religion of the Christians spread, it was inevitable that Jesus

¹⁴This part of the process has been learnedly traced out by Strauss, and is adopted by many of the scholars contributing to the *Enc. Biblica*, e. g. Prof. P. W. Schmiedel.

could not escape the ideals of Greek philosophy. In this age of which we are thinking there was abroad a metaphysical theory of God being too far exalted to be apprehended by the finite mind, and thus the need of a Logos or Word to be used as a Medium for God's expression of Himself. It was but a matter of time and opportunity for this Greek speculation to become identified with the already idealized Jesus of Nazareth. In this way he became indispensable as the only way to the Father. The son of Joseph and Mary was removed out of the category of humanity, and he becomes the uncreated and, therefore, eternal Son of God.

The fourth Gospel is but a collection of parables or allegories intended by the writer to illustrate the identification we have just mentioned. It is the work of a beautiful religious genius, a man who seems to have gathered to his own spirit many of the best things in Greek and Hebrew religion.

The early days of Christianity contain no more sublime tribute to the Master of Christians than this intensely spiritual contribution of the Greek mind. When we come to analyze the portraits which the different Gospels give us of Jesus, we shall see that not only does this writer differ widely in his portrait from the Synoptics, but at times in his earnestness for doctrine he be-

trays the character of Jesus to unlovely traits. Imbedded, however, in its mysteries, wonders and arguments there are precious seeds of the early Christian consciousness of good, which again confirms the statement that "in its legends a people often registers the best of its religious feeling".¹⁵

We pass on to speak briefly of some of the things which were inevitable as soon as Jesus had become "the visible representation of the Invisible God".¹⁶ Sinlessness must of necessity be attributed to him, and the fourth Gospel even puts the unlikely question in his mouth, "which of you convinceth me of sin?"¹⁷ To the earliest Christians he is thought of as one who "knew no sin".¹⁸ Yet there is no evidence that Jesus himself did ever lay claim to such a state. Like other sons of men he learnt from his falls, and grand as are the possibilities of a good life in this world, a life of *constant* goodness is unthinkable. Since our ideas of sin have received modifications from evolution¹⁹ and we no longer treat it as the damning thing of early theological thought, we feel no concern to preserve this good man sinless.

Another significant result of this widening of

¹⁵von Dobschütz, quoted by Prof. Peabody *Jesus Christ and the Ch. Character*, p. 43. ¹⁶Col. i: 15. ¹⁷John viii: 46. ¹⁸2 Cor. v. 21. ¹⁹Cf. Article "The Sinlessness of Jesus" by the author in *Hibbert Journal*, v. No. 3.

the nature and office of Jesus, is the universalism that is attributed to him. These world-purposes are strangely emphasized in the fourth Gospel. The Jesus who only reluctantly helped a Syro-Phoenician woman is said to "bear the sins of the world"²⁰ and proclaim a God who loved the world.²¹ He who commanded his disciples not to go in the way of the Gentiles or the towns of Samaria, himself is made to sit and talk with a Samaritan woman in one Gospel²² and to tell a story of a *Good Samaritan* in another.²³ He who was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel is now made desirous of sending his disciples "into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature".²⁴ If there is one thing evident in our gospels when critically and closely studied it is that the Jesus of our modern foreign missionary societies is an ideal, and by no means, a historical person.

It will have been noticed that up to the present one important piece of fiction has been omitted—the resurrection. This was because we felt that it could not be absolutely classed beneath any of the factors already mentioned; for it partakes of all and yet others. Belief in the resuscitation of the dead played a large part in the Jewish

²⁰John i: 29. ²¹John iii: 16. ²²John iv. ²³Lk. x: 30
²⁴Matt. xxviii: 19. Mk. xvi: 15.

thought of the time, and this fact with the credulity and historical carelessness of the populace with whom Christianity first spread provided good material for the growth of such a legend. "For the imagination of the Palestinian Jews—at all times prone to exaggeration—the bound between the natural and the spiritual worlds becomes so fluctuating, that they found no difficulty in seeing in a mighty personality like Jesus, an ancient prophet returned to earth, and, therefore, risen from the dead, an Elias, a Jeremiah or even a lately beheaded John the Baptist. Popular conceptions of this kind such as the evangelists record for us, are clear proof how natural the thought of the resurrection of a good man was to the Jewish people".²⁵

Our faith is not by any means made "vain" by such an interpretation, for faith can "live beyond the forms of faith". When the entangling alliance of religion and history has passed away we shall be in a far better position to tell forth the old, old story of God's good-will and of man's ability to possess that same will. For it is borne in upon us, that, large as was the place of the resurrection in early Christian thought, it was

²⁵O. Pfleiderer *Primitive Christianity*, I, p. 9. The Pope's recent decree that the resurrection is not a fact of history and cannot be demonstrated, but must be accepted in faith is surely the last and worst attempt at defence!

not in miracles, not in dogmas, not in legends, but in wonders of love, of brotherhood, of a holy enthusiasm for humanity that lay the mystic power which then began to turn men from darkness to light, from selfishness to the Living God.

CHAPTER IV.

A MODERN CHRISTIAN SYMBOL.

"For poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact."—*M. Arnold.*

"A pious fiction is still a fiction."—*Amiel.*

In the course of Christian history there has arisen what has been termed, the Christian consciousness. In all doubts and matters of dispute regarding the character and the actions of Jesus, the Christian consciousness has been the determining factor. As a matter of fact, this consciousness is not Christian; the elements which have come together to compose it forbid that we should so narrow it under the name of Christian. This consciousness is Hebrew, Greek and Roman, as well as Christian. In fact as this consciousness is understood among Occidental peoples, it is largely Gothic.¹ It is the religious consciousness of the civilization which is the fruit not only of the influence of Jesus, but of all the good who directly and indirectly have touched our characters.²

In this consciousness is an ideal life to whom the Christian gives the name of Jesus. This ideal

¹Cf. "Christian, Greek or Goth?"—*Hibbert Journal*, iii, 3.

²Cf. later, ch. vii.

has now become a criterion by which to judge the Jesus of the Gospels. We are told that Jesus could not have cursed the fig-tree, or caused the death of a herd of swine, because such actions are repugnant to "the Christian consciousness". As is very evident, this consciousness in cases of this kind, means nothing else than the protest of the advanced religious culture of our day. It is an unconscious refusal of a civilized religion to appropriate the antiquated and crude notions of early Christianity. In the criticism of those who have received a scientific view of the world, but who yet seek to retain a place in orthodoxy, such arbitrary decisions as these are very common. "Liberal orthodoxy" is little more than a translation of history into poetry. Their Christ is the Christ of experience, not the Christ of the Gospels, or the Christ of Galilee. Passages of Scripture are interpreted not so much in harmony with facts as with the ideals of "the Christian consciousness". It is this Christian consciousness which is the source of most of the errors of modern exegesis; little is drawn from the Bible, everything is taken to it, and because of this

"The Bible is the Book
Where each his dogma seeks,
And each his dogma finds."

The Jesus of this consciousness, from the his-

torical point of view, is a fiction; and one of the great needs of the religious thought of modern civilization is to realize its fictitious nature, and keep poetry in its proper place. The poetical is allowed too freely in our presentation of the facts of history. Even some recent writers³ of critical lives of Jesus who have tried to present us with what they term the "real" or "actual" Jesus, allow their historical sense to be forfeited to the poetical. It is little enough that we have in the Gospels to provide us with a foundation for an advocacy of the leadership of Jesus, but when most of this short story is eliminated by historical criticism, it is the wonder of ordinary men how the critic can make out a case for the leadership of Jesus.

Akin to all we have already written is the desire, visible in many quarters at the present day, to make Jesus the leader of each characteristic feature of an age. Traditionalism and orthodoxy are so far taken into consideration that men feel if only they can get the warrant of Jesus for some of their heresies all will be well. As a matter of fact, a congregation will forgive all a minister's

³ E. g. N. Schmidt in his *Prophet of Nazareth*, and to some extent Bousset in his *Jesus*.

heresies, so long as he "says a gude word for Jesus Christ".⁴

One prominent instance of this adaptation was begun some years ago, when ministers first preached the final salvation of the race. The general progress of civilized religion made it impossible for them to proclaim the old terrors of everlasting torment. The last verse of the 25th chapter of the First Gospel became the subject of many learned philological dissertations.⁵ The Greek word "Aionios" was found to have an indefinite content, and this gave the liberal theologians the opportunity to credit Jesus with universalism. In this way Jesus was made to represent the culture and refinements of modern religion. Actually, however, the old theology holds the truth, Jesus was not a Universalist. Philological discussions, leading to such indefinite conclusions, by no means determine the position of Jesus. Jesus preached everlasting punishment, but it must be granted that it was not an emphasized part of his message, its very negativeness will exclude that consideration. It is very probable that he never gave a thought to all that his utterances on this point involved. As we have already said, he did not possess a systematic the-

⁴Ian Maclaren, "His Mother's Sermon." ⁵See Farrar's *Eternal Hope*, Excursus iii.

ology, in this case he seems to have adopted the terms of the then popular theology and used them without inquiring into their full significance. It is very possible that if Jonathan Edwards or Charles Spurgeon had faced him and shown him all they found implied in his words, he would at once have repudiated it all. The point, however, to be remembered here, is that in a Universalism that seeks to make Jesus its only leader we have illustrated one way in which Jesus has become a symbol.

We pass on to note how, to an even more confusing degree, the name of Jesus is utilized. Even as in a theological age Jesus became the criterion of all theology, so, in a social age like the present, Jesus becomes the greatest socialist.⁶ We are told that the world is "a rudderless vessel", and Jesus is the pilot to whom men are turning for the solution of their social problems. A liberal thinker like Professor Francis G. Peabody has strangely supplied us of late, with some instances of the "adaptability" of the man of Galilee. Although in one place he tells us that the teaching of Jesus is misapplied "when used as a manual of social mechanics",⁷ he, nevertheless,

⁶I use the word in no technical sense. ⁷Prof. Peabody *Jesus Christ and Christian Character*, p. 16.

applies the Jesus of his "Christian consciousness" very freely to the needs of the day.

He takes, for instance, an isolated saying found in Matthew about "the field" being "the world"—which calls for intricate criticism to see if Jesus ever said it—and writes, "His message is not personal only * * * but comprehensive, expansive, universal. Beyond the Palestinian valleys, beyond the mountains that shut in the North, and the strip of sea touched with the Western light stretched the field of his social dream".⁸ One wonders when reading such beautiful words, why such a glorious social dream did not betray itself more. The wide-awake Jesus seems to have thought most, if not altogether, of the lost sheep of the House of Israel. It seems only too plain that the professor has been deceived by his "Christian consciousness". Of course, such poetical effusions are very attractive to the masses, and to the Pragmatist may even seem as truth. We have no doubt that if some good souls belonging to the Methodist or Baptist churches could read what Professor Peabody says of Jesus, they would feel grateful to him and overlook his minor heresies. Where we are concerned, however, this Christian consciousness must be neutral, poetry and fiction must be excluded from interfering with

⁸Ibid, p. 6.

facts of history. This modern poetical Jesus is by no means confined to one man. There are thousands who every week preach on the same poetical basis.

To these who are sometimes called Liberal Orthodox, or Neo-Hegelians, we now turn our attention. Their whole endeavor is to retain their philosophy and at the same time retain Christianity as the Absolute Religion.⁹ They, therefore, believe that "the only essential object of saving faith is the ideal Christ, that is, the ideal of God-pleasing humanity".¹⁰ Miracles, legends and historical events are of no moment, the ideal Christ is everything. Jacobi very clearly shows their view of the historical Jesus in the following, from a letter he writes to Claudius: "A divine life represents itself to you under the image and with the name of Christ. * * * What Christ may have been outside of you, for himself, whether the reality of him corresponds to your notion or not, or whether he ever really existed at all, all this can make no difference to the essential truth of your idea, nor to the value of the dispositions which spring from it."¹¹ I quote thus from this letter because from our present standpoint, it is not only a condemna-

⁹Cf. Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*. ¹⁰Pfeiderer, *Philosophy of Religion*, IV., 120, 121. ¹¹Quoted by Pfeiderer.

tion of itself, but of the whole movement, under whatever name it cloaks its real meaning. It has been, and for many English and American preachers yet is, a most successful attempt to pour new wine in old wine-skins. Its days, however, are numbered; it is not the end of religion; it is one of the natural stages in the evolution of the religious consciousness. At present it enables a minister to be a radical Higher Critic and at the same time satisfy the requirements of an orthodox congregation.

In the world of the churches this statement has recently received striking illustration in the "New Theology" that has arisen in London. The Rev. R. J. Campbell, with whom the movement has become identified, admits his dependence on Thomas Hill Green, and every sermon he preaches confirms his admission.¹² He makes the Neo-Hegelian distinction between Jesus and "the eternal Christ," and to all who have followed his utterances it is evident that this eternal Christ is the imminent God, or as he sometimes puts it, a man's "best self". The words and actions of Jesus are given a poetical value. They are lifted away from the limits of Palestine and A. D. 30, and given a universal and contemporary

¹²The author has read his weekly sermons for nearly four years. Cf. his interesting book *The New Theology*, especially chapters v-vii.

significance. Every dogma of the Christian church is found to be "true in a sense", or "true from a certain point of view"; whereas from a plain historical and common sense point of view,—“in a deeper sense,”—they are absolutely false.

Such teachers must realize that they speak thus for popular reasons. The plain, unvarnished history concerning the young Jew who lived a good life nineteen hundred years ago, is far too rough and meagre to appeal to the masses of to-day. Therefore "our Occidental minds have been placed under the spell of Oriental fancy". "The actual incarnation of God is in universal man; but that is too little dramatic and picturesque for a popular gospel. To see God in your casual neighbor requires a keenness of penetration, a generosity of sympathy and a breadth of good will that are not to be looked for promiscuously in the great congregation. So the whole is made into a drama, wherein the sinless and triumphant Christ becomes the protagonist of our burdened and sinful humanity. It is this predominantly emotional process that is the distinguishing mark of the New Theology. It springs from a pure romanticism, which mingles all the slowly accumulating spiritual treasures of the race in the capacious crucible of its dissolving fancy, and pours out the result as what it calls

the eternal Christ''.¹³ I have quoted thus lengthily from this criticism because it has so definitely shown the true nature of these new theologies, which are all new patches on old garments. The "eternal Christ" and Professor Peabody's social Jesus are both of the same family; they are the children of the religious imagination. They are evidence of the unwillingness with which the human heart lets go its old loves. Until the grand and emancipating truths of civilized religion which draws inspiration from all the heroes of time, and aspires to all the ideals of eternity, becomes the possession of all men and women, till then will the fictitious ideal of the "Christian consciousness" be preached. In the mouth of such a loving personality like Gipsy Smith the old symbol will again and again be endured with power. The truth of real religion, independent of such a symbol, will come but slowly. Anyone who listens to Gipsy Smith will see that his Jesus is the ideal Son of Man, into whose life has come from all sources, all that is tender, inviting and consoling. The Gipsy tells us that "wherever Jesus comes, somebody knows, and wants to be where he is, for the great, throbbing, weary, weeping, sad, broken heart of the world needs

¹³*The Knowledge of God*—R. W. Boynton.

Jesus''.¹⁴ Every religious soul, however, will know that when the heart of man is "throbbing, weary, weeping, sad and broken", it does not stop to analyze the ideal that is presented for its comfort and inspiration; the drowning man will catch at a straw, and only after knowing its uselessness will seek something stronger. He whose eyes are on the eternal city of the good, who amid many temptations does not lose heart, who bravely in "the strength that God supplies" presses on to higher and nobler things, will not stop to clutch at straws. He realizes that the new wine of pure religion cannot remain in the old bottles of any system; and praiseworthy as are the efforts of Neo-Hegelians, Neo-Catholics and Broad Churchmen, the day is not far off when the old bottles will burst and the power within will be given greater freedom to flow over the world, bringing life, light and love into the hearts that are held in the night and twilight of ignorance and dogmatism.

¹⁴*Hom. Review*, LIII, 6, 475.

CHAPTER V.

THE JESUS OF THE GOSPELS.

"The question is not: what will satisfy the Christian consciousness of the present day, to believe or not to believe concerning Christ?—but what stands written concerning Christ?—and to this the above consciousness must accommodate itself as best it may."—*Strauss*.

In all its history the assumption of the Christian church has been that in the four Gospels we have four distinct but harmonious views of one original. All contradictions were never viewed as such, they were retreated from in two different ways. One way was to speak of them as "difficulties" which only called for the ingenuity—or spiritual enlightenment—of an apologist to make clear. The very existence of elements which mutually excluded each other was never admitted, everything seeming so was only dark for the want of an apologist. On the other road of retreat the over-curious critic would be warned that such problems were "holy mysteries" which God never intended we should probe or question. The one consideration, however, that Truth is clear and not contradictory, plain and not mysterious, self-evident and not needing "apologetics" is ever leading good men and women to see that if Christianity and Truth are one, then Christians

act very strangely towards it. We have already noticed that a process of selection is taking place with regard to the gospels, there is only a survival of the fittest. All that offends the modern religious temper is cast out and only that which the critic deems best is allowed to remain. Much of the modern Higher Criticism is to be characterized in this way. It is true that the critic pleads that the motive of his work is that men may behold the "real" Jesus; but if he were to analyze himself more he would recognize that he already possessed a representation of Jesus which was prior to all he may have gathered from his criticism of the Gospels. Every man can promise to be sincere, but no man can promise to be impartial.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest to the reader that the portraits of Jesus given in the Gospels bear strongly the marks of the doctrinal characteristics of the writers. Critics have long been known to maintain a doubtful conception of the Fourth Gospel, because of the evident manner in which the writer seeks to produce in Jesus certain ideals of Alexandrian philosophy. That, however, which is so strongly emphasized in this Gospel is also visible in the other three. The Jesus of the Synoptics is as much removed from the human plane of experience as the Logos-

Christ of the Fourth Gospel. In all the Gospels he is a miracle-worker, in all four he speaks of himself in transcendental terms, so that if we have rejected the Johannine Christ we should seriously consider whether we are not also logically bound to reject the Jesus of the Synoptics.

In order to make plainer by examples some of these statements we may proceed to note some of the peculiar features of the Jesus of the First Gospel, Matthew. The tradition is that this writer has Jewish Christians in his mind, and it is these that he seeks to influence,¹ but this is only half the truth. Each gospel is a tendency-writing and it often appears that the truth of the narrative is forfeited to the end in view. (In early Christian literary ethics the end often justified the means.) This writer not only writes for Jewish Christians, but takes good care to avoid any good word for the Gentile or Pauline Christians. The Jesus of Matthew could not have told the story of the Good Samaritan; Matthew and his readers will not tolerate such a breaking down of national and ecclesiastical barriers. It is true that some Pauline ideas are found in this Gospel with its Ebionite characteristics,² but the writer leaves us in no doubt as to which side he favors. His Jesus has come to Israel³ and the disciples are

¹Cf. Westcott *Intro. to Gospels*, ch. iv. (1860.) ²Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, col. 1842. ³Matt. xv: 24.

to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;⁴ they are not to go into the way of the Gentiles.⁵ He does not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it; he even tells the crowds and his disciples that they are to do what the Scribes and Pharisees command.⁷ When the end of all things draws near they are not to forget that they are Jews and thus are told to pray that their flight may not be on the Sabbath.⁸ It is very evident that the sympathies of this writer are with that section of the early church who antagonized Paul by requiring that every Gentile become a Jew before being received into the Christian church. As a consequence of this we find that this Gospel gives to Peter the pre-eminence;⁹ to him is given the means of entrance into the kingdom.¹⁰ On the other hand, Paul is made "the least" in the kingdom because he breaks the old commandments and teaches others to do the same.¹¹ The tendency to antinomianism in Paul's theology is attacked by Matthew's Jesus, and however much they cry "Lord, Lord", they are told to depart. The Jesus of Matthew is unable to distinguish between a moral and an immoral

⁴Matt. xix: 28. ⁵Matt. x: 5. ⁶Matt. v: 17-20. ⁷Matt. xxiii: 2. ⁸Matt. xxiv: 20.

⁹Matt. x: 2. ¹⁰Matt. xvi: 17-19. ¹¹Matt. v: 19. The allusion is unmistakably to 1 Cor. xv: 9.

"lawlessness".¹² Even the seeming universalism of the post-resurrection behest to preach the gospel to all nations is narrowed down to "those things which I have commanded you",¹³ which included the old law which would not pass away.

We may deal with the next two gospels together, because although they possess certain minor peculiarities, nevertheless have this in common that they both represent Pauline Christianity; they are therefore against our First Gospel in spirit and intention.

Briefly, we may note that in Mark the writer receives the Pauline dictum that "the Lord is the Spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty".¹⁴ Necessarily therefore to him "the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath", and over against the Sabbatarianism of Matthew we have the statement that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. The Pauline teaching on predestination is also to be found in Mark. The Jesus of this Gospel even seems to borrow the very phraseology of Paul, in speaking of those who are blinded lest they should see and be converted.¹⁵ These two points alone are sufficient to indicate the relation of this gospel to the Jewish Christianity of Matthew. Mark is the least definite in tendency of all the Gospels and

¹²Matt. vii: 23; 19. "*την ἀνομίαν*." cf. Pfeiderer's *Hibbert Lectures*, iv. ¹³Matt. xxviii: 142 Cor. iii: 17.

¹⁵Cf. Mark iv: 11, 12; Rom. xi: 8.

the true spirit of Paulinism is found in Luke. In the Third Gospel we find both Jewish Christian and Pauline elements, the latter, however, decidedly preponderates. The smaller element seems rather, as Pfeiderer has suggested, an attempt at reconciliation:¹⁶ a white flag, that in peace the Pauline teaching may ultimately rule. In Luke the Gentiles are made to feel as much as possible how large a sympathy Jesus had with them; while the Jews are often placed in a very unfavorable light. When the Jesus of Luke refers to the Gentiles of the Old Testament, the Jews try to kill him.¹⁷ In the Story of the Good Samaritan¹⁸ and in the healing of the ten lepers,¹⁹ the Gentiles are given as possessing more true religion than the Jews. The Jesus of this Gospel is not Jewish enough to be content with sending out so characteristically national a number of disciples as twelve, he must send out seventy also,²⁰ for to the Jew there were supposed to be seventy Gentile nations.²¹ It is significant also that there is more rejoicing over the return of the seventy than of the twelve.²² It should be further noted that the Jesus of this Gospel had sat at the feet of Paul and learnt that "all things are clean", for when he sends forth his mission-

¹⁶Pfeiderer, *Hibbert Lectures*, ch. 4. ¹⁷Luke iv: 25-30.
¹⁸Luke x: 30. ¹⁹Luke xvii: 16. ²⁰Luke x: 1. ²¹*Enc. Biblica*, 3438, §9. ²²Luke x: 17-24.

aries he tells them to eat whatever is set before them in "whatever town they come to".²³ In the allegory of his visit to Mary and Martha we see that the Pauline idea of a life of faith, quiet and devotional, is set over against the Jewish anxiety for salvation by works. Here Jesus was in effect quoting the Pauline dogma, "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law". All these various references indicate that the tendency of this Gospel is to uphold the work of Paul, and the Jesus to whom we are introduced is made a servant of the writer's doctrines. He is made to rise a great way above all Jewish narrowness and sectarianism, and to possess a great admiration for heathen nations. Even when he is morally bound to condemn their thirst for pleasure, the Jesus of Luke is careful to tell us that he was speaking of "the Gentiles of the world".²⁴

In view of these different pictures of Jesus, a natural question to ask is, which is the "real" Jesus? The friend of the Jews or the friend of the Gentiles? The Jesus of Peter or the Jesus of Paul? The conservative party in the church tends to decide in favor of the latter, while the liberal churches tend to favor the former. When, however, the reasons for these selections are

²³Luke x: 8. ²⁴Luke xii: 30.

shown, they balance each other very closely, so much so that it is possible to see that the choice in each case is not the result of reason so much as the consequence of individual temperament; the whole rests upon individual standpoint, not the testing of pros and cons.

We come last of all to the portrait of Jesus given us by the Fourth Gospel. Strangely, the majority of the Christians of to-day love this portrait best; in fact it is no exaggeration to say that a superficial understanding of the Johannine Christ colors the whole modern consciousness of Jesus. That such a conception is superficial will be seen as we proceed. The most beautiful words are in this Gospel, but the most beautiful character is in the previous Gospels. The mere fact that Renan's emphasis of this last picture provided him with materials to speak of Jesus as less a man in Jerusalem than in Galilee,²⁵ should keep us from attributing to the Johannine Jesus the highest character. Beautiful sayings, mysterious words and personal dignity do not make holiness or strength of character, and in this gospel we do well not to be deceived by them.

It is not our purpose to trace the stages which led from the Pauline new Adam to the conception of the Ephesian and Colossian letters and from

²⁵Renan, *Life of Jesus*, ch. 22.

these to the Logos conceptions of the Johannine literature. Our concern is not with the philosophy to which Christianity is here adapted. Our only aim is to view the Jesus whose picture is here given to us.

In this Gospel Jesus ceases to be human and becomes a lofty, mysterious being who seems independent of all the human limitations that it was possible for him to possess without destroying his semblance of humanity. The Jesus of the Synoptics is tempted, but no such thing comes to this person, he is far above such human liabilities. As one has said, "he nowhere hesitates, but strides forward with slight reference to human affairs, like a visitant from some higher sphere".²⁶ The simple words of the first three Gospels are not used by him;²⁷ in their place we possess a peculiar esoteric vocabulary²⁸ that leads men's minds away to philosophy. The Jesus who taught simple men to pray, now prays for them, while from beginning to end we have a wearisome insistence on his own dignity. In place of the parables, we have, as even Westcott has not hesi-

²⁶J. H. Crooker, *Diff. N. T. views of Jesus*. ²⁷The following words are peculiar to the Synoptics: repent, repentance, forgiveness, faith, baptism, preach, rebuke, sinners, publicans, disease, unclean, leper, parable, etc., cf. *Enc. Bib.* 1765, §2.

²⁸The peculiarity of John's vocabulary is best seen in the original: λόγος, ζωή, φῶς, σκοτία, Ἀλήθεια, κόσμος, δοξή, θάνατος, μαρτυρία, κρίσις, ἔργον, γινώσκω, σημεῖον, σὰρξ, ἀγάπη, ἑρωτᾶν, ὁ πατήρ, πρόβατα, ἀμήν ἀμήν, πιστεύω, ὄνομα.

tated to say, instruction which is "lost in the mazes of mystical speculation".²⁹ His miracles are "performed" in a spirit quite foreign to the other writers; they are not so much the result of compassion as the consequence of a desire to "manifest his glory"; he has become thereby a mere thaumaturgist. Instead of quietly teaching on the hillsides of Galilee he is wrangling in a proud, boastful spirit with the Jews in Jerusalem. His gospel is nothing more than "believe on the Son of God". He is too divine to have the human experience of Gethsemane, so that is omitted and in its place we have a high-priestly prayer.³⁰ In this prayer there is much to criticize. His only reason for asking God to let his disciples go to heaven is "that they may behold my glory". The story of the crucifixion, where one would expect his humanity to show itself, is brought before us like a "spectral drama", wherein the hero, after impressing all with his importance, passes off the scene without murmur or cry, except only the dramatical and doctrinal declaration, "It is finished".

We have no hesitation in deciding against this portrait of Jesus. There is too much evidence that he is only an ideal, not fully worked out,

²⁹Westcott, *Intro. to Gospels*, ch. 5, p. 263. (1860.)

³⁰Ch. 17.

but sufficiently complete for us to be able to find a niche for him in the temple of the world's ideals. What shall we say, however, of the portraits given us in the other Gospels? In the light of what we have seen there can be but one answer. The Jesus of the Synoptics, like that of John, we found to be the servant of his biographers, the spokesman of their peculiar doctrines; therefore after careful thought we decide to reject all. The real Jesus *may* be hidden below the Jesus of the Gospels, but since the day in which he is supposed to have lived, no one has seen him. Gone is gone and dead is dead.

CHAPTER VI.

SUNSET AND DAWN.

"In what remains, it can hardly be sufficiently emphasized that we possess only an excessively meagre précis of what Jesus said."—*P. W. Schmiedel.*

"We are idealists, and should be ashamed to have it said of us that we did not form things, but that things formed us."
F. Schiller.

"They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him"; so may the Christian soul lament after reading the preceding chapters. The soul may, if any credence is given to our results, pass into a stage of desolation. To some it will be worse than the valley of the shadow of death, for it may seem like the passing away forever of all that has made life worth living. The night will have come in which no man can work.

When, however, the moment of calm thought returns and we are able to look around and see what is left, we will find—perhaps not at once, but eventually—that a great deal is left for us, and that the residuum is as gold after the earth and dross have been taken from it. Our creed may be a small one, but it will be our own; our truths may be simple, but we shall have earned them. As our standpoint becomes more and more positive, so will all become infinitely precious; and

no enthusiasm for traditionalism will be half so warm as the love and attachment we shall have for our religion. "In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain: If there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than licentious, better to be true than false, better to be brave than a coward."¹ He who holds firmly to these "fundamentals" will soon pass from the night into the day. Fear not, the day is at hand. When the night is darkest the dawn is near the hill-tops and soon will every one stand in the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. No longer shall we be troubled to test historical evidence to find a basis for our religion. No longer shall we be asked to deny our historic sense for the sake of preserving a fiction. No longer shall we need to make cowardly flight into "holy mysteries"; no longer need to study "apologetics". No longer shall we tremble for the victory of truth or the reign of God. No longer shall we feel compelled to adhere to one system of religion, for fear that there may be no salvation "outside of Christ", for old things will have passed away and all things will have become new. We shall make our character and

¹F. W. Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 55

actions our apologetics, and stand for the strongest and oldest of all truths, that salvation is growth in goodness.

What is left? more, than with what we began. We started out with a few loaves and fishes and already we are gathering up baskets of fragments. Yes, fragments, for we have seen that there is no one life of perfect goodness, but scattered up and down the ages over all the world are these fragments of the eternal life which come to us as the grace of God and from these we nourish our souls.

We cease to call ourselves Christians; we desire only to be good and go about doing good. Good in our thinking, good in our speaking, good in all we do and in all we leave undone. There is nothing good in the world but what we may draw from it. All things are good and all things are ours. Believing as we do, no metaphysical dogmas about our life, "nothing more complex than that God is, and that he is good, that he is near, that he is loving, nothing more complex than that you are my sisters, my brothers, my friends",² we have the spiritual treasures of the ages. Into the city of our God flows all the wealth of the nations.³ The kingly lives of Earth bring

²P. Chunder Mozoomdar, cf. Prof. Upton's *Hibbert Letters*, ix, p. 361. ³Cf. M. Müller's *Life and Letters*, Vol. ii, pp. 65, 66.

all their glory into it. All the days—for there is no night there—the gates thereof shall never be closed. Islam shall come with her unchanging affirmation, Allah is God, and the only God. The Buddhists will come with their gospel of self-conquest, simplicity, kindness to man and beast. The Brahmins will come with their story of the inner life. The Hebrews will be there with their gospel of righteousness. The Christians with their love and forgiveness. All the treasures of God are ours. Let us pass on and move upward to the hills, to which we may have often cast our eyes, and there in freedom and joy let us live and work

“Till all God’s living altars claim,
One holy light, one heavenly flame.”

CHAPTER VII.

ONLY ONE RELIGION.

"Wherever there are traces of human life, there are traces of Religion."—*F. Max Müller.*

"trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."—*Wordsworth.*

In the rise of the race to the fuller possession of God we pass from religions to religion. The day, when each man claimed that his form or aspect of religion was all religion, is fast drawing to a close. In the western skies we already see the signs of departure and the old antagonisms born of the old partialities will soon be forgotten.

It is not for us, the children of a lovelier dawn to speak harshly of the day that is gone. We who dwell in the light have no need to curse the darkness, for in the long day of God there is both evening and morning. First the evening of fears, fancies and strange superstitions, then the night of over-loyal adherence to them, then the dawn of light and life.

It is characteristic of youth to be impulsive and impatient; it often wearies itself in the early dawn, before the mists have fully cleared, in fighting the dreams of the previous night. In our youthfulness we at times speak harshly of what we saw in the twilight of the day that is gone,

forgetting for the moment that we ourselves are barely out of the early twilight of the morning. Only when the sun is risen does the morning understand the evening. God makes both evening and morning to rejoice. Each has its gospel adapted to the time of day, and when we can look on this gospel with the eyes of God, we shall perceive that it is only with evening and morning that one day is formed.

We of the dawn rejoice with the children of the night, for their work even in its unattractive forms has added to our light. Their narrowness and their bigotry,¹ their ignorance and their claims to divine revelations and above all the tenacity with which they adhered to their own forms of religion have brought to us a wealth of information concerning the human soul, its trials and aspirations. If they had been indifferent and had not cared to preserve the power and purity of their beliefs, we should in all probability be without the Vedas, the Bible and the wealth of early thought that is ours to-day, and

¹When bigotry meets bigotry, harm comes; the past whose good we see, failed when the Caliph Omar destroyed the priceless Alexandrian Library, saying, "The contents of these books are either in accord with the teaching of the Koran, or they are opposed to it. If in accord, then they are useless, since the Koran itself is sufficient; if in opposition they are pernicious and must be destroyed." In the same way the original Avesta was doubtless destroyed.

by means of which we understand our own aspirations and religious feelings the better.

We have no blame for the night of ignorance and error, but we are pained when in these morning hours we see the spirits of darkness.² When ministers of the Christian religion declare that the Christian religion is the only true religion, and that other religions are false, we are listening to old ideals that have been reached and left behind. Such messages are anachronisms and like all other forms of atavism must be excluded from all sane and normal life.

From the days when men like Herder³ declared that religion was a constituent element of human nature has the doom of the old ideas been seen. No longer do we hear of people "getting religion", they possess it and it possesses them. Never more will it be known as the property of a few, for far beyond all horizons is the Church of God found.

"From oldest time, on farthest shores,
Beneath the pine and palm,
One Unseen Presence she adores,
With silence or with psalm."

The whole world has been compassed and the past restored. Old faiths have been brought to

²Cf. two citations from sermons of Dr. Morgan Dix of New York, and Dr. Joseph Parker of London in L. H. Jordan's *Comparative Religion: Genesis and Growth*. Note xvi, pages 525-6.

³Cf. his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*.

light and new faiths have been traced to older forms. "It is now conceded with practical unanimity that man everywhere, no matter at what point in the stage of civilization we may find him, yields obedience to some form of religious belief and worship."⁴ Another writer gathers up his researches in other words and tells us that "nowhere we find either a great human race, or even a division—however unimportant—of that race professing atheism"⁵.

It might well be asked, for what do we look when we look for religion? From the time when Seneca said that religion was "to know God and imitate him", to the day when Huxley affirmed that it was "reverence and love for the ethical ideal and the desire to realize that ideal in life", the thoughtful world has given expression to many definitions of religion. For ourselves we are not attracted by definitions in the sphere of religion, for every definition is of necessity a limitation. Rather would we indicate religion by its root and possessing this means of recognition be able to trace it wherever it is found. This root is found or implied in a large number of the current definitions of religion⁶ and has by Dr. Paul

⁴L. H. Jordan, *Comp. Religion: Genesis and Growth*, p. 218.

⁵J. L. A. Quatrefages, *L'Espèce humaine* (1877), p. 483.

⁶Cf. definitions of Religion by Kant, Ruskin, Arnold, Comte, Bain, Caird, Hegel, Froude, Mill, Gruppe, Carlyle, Cassells and Martineau in Kidd's *Social Evolution*, ch. iv. p. 90.

Carus been concisely worded as "a yearning for otherness".⁷ This root meets the requirements of religious phenomena in all lands and ages.

Religion is in all religions; religion is the genus, religions the species. There is truth and there is error in all. We must learn to distinguish between what is essential and what is accidental, between what is universal and what is local, between what is eternal and what is temporary. Max Müller who was ever proud to call himself a Christian confesses to us that "all religions are mere stammerings, our own as much as that of the Brahmins". He tells us in the same letter that "there is much rubbish in the present form of Brahminism, but so also is there in the present form of Christianity".⁸

Such must be the true attitude to all forms of religion. Emphasize the essential and you work to unite the whole world in one Universal Church; emphasize the accidental and you divide, and increase ill-feeling. One religion can only be set over against another in its accidental and local aspects, not in its essential realities. Religions may be compared, but religion is one.

Much capital has been made by some conservative Christian writers out of Max Müller's con-

⁷Cf. *The Open Court*, vol. xxi. i., page 4. ⁸Cf. Letter to Dr. Acland, *Life and Letter of F. Max Müller*, vol. ii., appendix I. p. 463-4.

fession of evil things in the Sacred Books of the East.⁹ In his general preface to this series he writes, "I confess it has been for many years a problem to me, ay, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellant".¹⁰ Might not the same be said of the ancient books of any land? It certainly can be said with regard to the sacred books of Palestine. These works, whether we term them canonical or uncanonical,¹¹ contain the repellant and ridiculous alongside of that which is beautiful and true. Then again, much of the "rubbish" of all sacred books is often due to the forms of thought and the peculiar idioms of each people. The Chinese do not perform their thinking in the terms of Western usage, even the American says things which to the ear of an educated Englishman sound silly and even repellant.¹² It would seem right to add in this connection that most if not all of the immorality of sacred books is only understood when we remember that the

⁹Cf. Dr. T. S. Berry's *Christianity and Buddhism*, (S. P. C. K.) Lect. i. ¹⁰The *Sacred Book of the East*, vol. I. pp. ix, xii.

¹¹Cf. *Life and Letters of Max Müller*, II, 129, for definition of canonical and uncanonical, in regard to the sacred books of the world. ¹²And vice versa.

sense of shame as known among ourselves is quite a modern development. The fact that it was almost absent in the past in no way affects the characters of the writers, although it might affect their usefulness to-day. In any case, such things can only refer to non-essentials. Whether you visit the Hindoo or the Hottentot, the Eskimo or the Terra del Fuegian, in all you will find this yearning for something not themselves, which constitutes the root of all religion from its lowest to its highest expressions. Already a knowledge—even if imperfect—of the Eternal “not ourselves” covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. If we concentrate our attention upon the forms and local elements of religion we shall often be tempted to agree with some evolutionists that religion is merely an unfit survival. There is no doubt that religions have perpetuated many of the forms of primitive thought, and its non-essentials have often proved a barrier to progress and civilization. As soon, however, as we learn to discriminate between the passing and the permanent we shall feel compelled to agree with Sabatier that “man is incurably religious”, for religion is a psychological necessity to us and an ineradicable element of our being.

If, as Tiele affirms,¹³ “religion is one of the

¹³*Enc. Brit.*, Article “Religion.”

mightiest motors in the history of mankind", we must attribute to it as a whole the credit for that progress which to-day we think of under the word civilization. To attribute modern civilization to the sole influence of one form of religion is to reveal our ignorance of both history and human nature. It has not been uncommon in the past to hear Jesus of Nazareth have the credit of all progress attributed to him;¹⁴ apart, however, from the denial given to this by the existence of a non-christian civilized Japan,¹⁵ the whole assertion is incompatible with our knowledge of the virtues and characteristics and historical causes of modern civilization. As we have already hinted, there have come a multitude of varied influences into the modern religious consciousness. Great as have been the influences of Oriental cults such as Christianity, it must not be forgotten that the stern heroic religion of our pre-christian forefathers has also played a large, perhaps even a larger, part in forming modern civilization. The passive virtues of the East may live within the walls of the churches, but the heroism of the first rough ages yet lives with the majority who are outside the churches. "To stifle all pain, to face the stroke of death with unflinching eye, to die

¹⁴Cf. Dr. C. A. Row's *Manual of Christian Evidence*, p. 30.

¹⁵Cf. *Hibbert Journal*, vol. iv: 1-41.

laughing under the bites of adders, to lament neither one's sins nor the loss of one's dearest friend: these were the characteristics of the old northern heroism."¹⁶ It is to these virtues won in primeval forests and on raging seas, that we have to attribute much of the unconquerable energy that has produced our modern civilization.¹⁷ There is a form of religion which is our own before that which the missionary brings to us, and this primeval consciousness is never wholly eradicated. In seeking, however, to give honor where honor is due, we may still seem to be glorifying a part at the expense of the whole. Gothicism is only a part; it shows us one way in which man yearns for something other than and beyond himself. The Goth who strives for Honor must find no fault with the Christian who reaches after Perfect Love. They have only one religion, they both worship the Most High. Harm only arises where one fights the other either by compulsion or narrow minded propagandism. With all the good that has come from missionary work, this evil far outweighs it and as the democratic tendencies of to-day extend into India and China, it will become more and more a source of evil to replace one form of religion by another. A

¹⁶Lessing's *Laocoon*, ch. i.

¹⁷Cf. art. "Christian, Greek or Goth,"—*Hibbert Journal*, vol. iii, p. 510.

good Hindoo is not only better than a bad Christian, but in the light of ultimate values, he is better as a good Hindoo than as a good Christian. If the essence of religion is the same the world over, the acceptance of the non-essentials which distinguish an alien system do not improve your own religion. Is it not the wiser policy to help all to reach the Highest that *they* see, rather than demand that they aspire to what we see? Ideals, like all good things, should be allowed to grow normally. We have already confessed that Christianity has not yet conquered the so-called Christian Occident. It is but confessing the same when we say that it will be as difficult for India or Japan to accept popular Christianity as for the Americans to adopt the Buddhism of Tibet. We are to develop religion, not religions.¹⁸ We have to think of the essence, not the forms; let these latter be those most natural to each land, but let each help the other to yet nobler forms and nobler worship of the Most High.¹⁹ Let the higher religions help the lower, not by imposing their tenets upon them, but by naturally evolving

¹⁸Thus, in China in 1904, a group of about one hundred leaders of religious propaganda—Confucianists, Mohammedans, Christians and others—assembled in Shantung and frankly discussed the question "How shall we best revive Religion in China?" Dr. Richards who was present says "there was not a single note of discord." ¹⁹In this connection Cf. Prof. Upton's *Hibbert Lectures*, Lect. ix, especially the note in reference to P. Chunder Mozoomdar

high aspirations out of the elements already existing.

Let the children of God, whatever their own peculiar form of religion may be, unite to tell the gospel of hope and life for all, that only those who think and live for themselves are heathen. When we arrive at a true understanding of religion we shall feel that it is a far nobler thing to bow with the Parsee or Inca and worship the glorious sun as it comes over the high hills in the morning than to grovel in the selfish pleasures of the money-grabber. Religion is with us; across all humanity we might write the old Hebrew word, Emmanuel. Some of us are lifting up our eyes unto the hills; others of us are penetrating to the innermost recesses of our own being, but we all seek and find. We are all the children of God, though children with different cries. Though with "no language but a cry", we recognize the need for light behind each other's cries. Hand in hand we step out into the day, striving, dreaming, toiling, thinking with our faces ever toward the Home of East and West, North and South,—the Home sought by all the children of the ages,—even God the Most High.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEST BIBLE.

"An ancient book is a fragment of ancient life, and to understand it aright we must treat it as a living thing."—

W. Robertson Smith.

"Everything that is worth thinking has already been thought before; we must only try to think it again."—*Goethe.*

The unique position which the Bible has taken in the literature of the world, especially since the Protestant Reformation, calls first of all for some explanation.

It has traveled through the centuries with the march of Christianity and shared its victories. The varied influences, political, racial and religious, which have given Christianity her present position among the religions of the world, have also strengthened the position of the Book from which she has drawn her credentials and much of her spiritual life.

A factor which has helped to preserve this uniqueness of the Bible was the great ignorance that prevailed in the past with regard to the Sacred Books of other religions. Taught that the virtues of the heathen were but "splendid sins", it was by no means unnatural that their

treasures of wisdom and spiritual experience should be held beneath contempt.

This does not seem to have been true with Christianity only, but was more or less true of every religion. In the world's onward march towards freedom the time had not arrived in these centuries for them to recognize that not only had God made of one blood all races of men, but also of one spirit; and thus to acknowledge that the aspirations of one nation were as precious as those of another. Here also, as in the evolution of all else we study, it is "evening and morning: one day", and God—and man also, in so far as his vision is the vision of God—declares that such a day is good.

During the last half century the Sacred Books of the world have come into our possession. Now through the patient research and learning of many scholars we are able to read with ease the words which in every race have been treasured as divine. In these "treasures of darkness" there is many a gem "of purest ray serene". Here we see much of that "softened light" which has cheered "the long watches of the night". One thing they compel all reverent hearts to confess—the truth is the peculiar property of none, but it

is "the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."

One not altogether unnatural result in Christian minds with regard to the good things taught in these ancient books, was to attribute them all to the influence of the Bible. It was felt by some that Christianity would never conquer these other religions unless it was shown that their light was a borrowed light from Christianity, and that their Sacred Books were in their good parts the result of some early unknown Bible influence. But only ignorance speaks like this to-day. Professor Max Müller wrote thirty-four years ago that "the opinion that the pagan religions were corruptions of the religion of the Old Testament, once supported by men of high authority and great learning, is now as completely surrendered as the attempts to explain Greek and Latin as corruptions of Hebrew".¹ It is now granted by all thoughtful men that all attempts like those, for instance, of the early Christian Fathers, to show that Pythagoras was a debtor to Hebrew wisdom, and Plato an "Atticising Moses", or that Aristotle learned his ethics from a Jew and that Seneca was a correspondent of St. Paul's,² were due "in

¹*Introduction to the Science of Religion*, p. 40. ²Cf. e. g. Justin, "Hort. Add. Gks." xiv: Origen "Against Celsus" i: xv., where Diodorus, Orpheus, Homer, Solon, Pythagoras and Plato are said to be indebted to Moses.

most cases to ignorance and in some to a lack of perfect honesty in controversial dealing".³ The man whose ideals for reading extend no higher than confining himself to the Bible,⁴ is even in the most conservative circles rapidly passing away. The devout soul possesses now a "divine library" from India, China, Egypt and Assyria, from which to draw ample inspiration and nourishment for the highest life. This holy literature, apart from containing many parallels to events and legends in the Bible, contains also a high religious and moral teaching equal to and in some cases superior to the contemporary teaching of the Bible. For instance, the morals of the ancient Egyptians as set forth in the Book of the Dead which came into use about 2000 B. C.,⁵ indicate a far higher standard than existed in Israel in David's time. "Yet in traditions that still linger among us the law under which David lived was perfect and divine, while the name of Egypt stands for darkness and sin."⁶ From all the Sacred Books of the world there could be gathered a real Holy Bible, adapted to every race and eternal in the value of its precepts. Many modern Christians desire to see a Bible issued which shall

³Dean Farrar, *Seekers after God*. ⁴E. g. John Wesley, "Let me be homo unius libri."

⁵*Enc. Biblica*, 1219. ⁶Dr. Callaway, *King David of Israel*, 152.

be free from those things which prevent it being read in the home as freely as might be. When it is remembered that "there is not a single sentence in the whole of the Sacred Books of the Chinese which might not be read aloud in any family circle",⁷ that they are completely exempt from "licentious descriptions" and "offensive expressions", it increases our longing to possess a holy book that shall contain the treasures of the past and become a pure light to shine for young and old in all our homes.⁸

The present custom in our churches of basing each sermon upon some passage from the Bible is one way in which the notion is perpetuated that the Bible is the only book which contains such good and beautiful thoughts. People who do not read widely need to be kept in constant remembrance of the fact that we have above emphasized that there is a divine inspiration present in many lands. Actually there is not a single good thought in Christianity which cannot be paralleled in systems outside of its influence.

Such discoveries may in the eyes of some appear as a lowering of the value of Christianity.

⁷Mr. Meadows, quoted by Dr. A. Smith in his *Chinese Characteristics*, 288. ⁸Very fair attempts at such a Bible are such books as Dr. S. Coit's *Message of Man*; Moncure D. Conway's *Sacred Anthology*, De Normandie's *Beauty of Wisdom*, and more recently *The Soul of the Bible*, by U. G. B. Pierce.

It certainly does deprive it of any claim to be a "special" revelation. Everything, however, which is good and ennobling in Christianity, really receives a heightened value from the fact that not alone has it so understood God. It is a grander thought and more worthy of God that the eternal truth shines not only from Palestine, but from East and West, from North and South. If loyalty in the past was sometimes understood as bigotry, not for one moment should we feel to-day that we best serve the religion we adopt as our own by being jealous of the good in other systems. The child of God likes to know that the hands that clasp his extend to other hands that encircle the world, that not from one land alone, but from many there comes the old, old story, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself."

So far we have only indicated about one-half of the literature from which we may draw good for our highest life. We have only spoken of the past. We have dwelt thus long upon the past because some who free themselves from its bondage, tend to react too violently against it. They see in its literature nothing but superstition and teachings wholly inapplicable to the present day. Such need to recognize that there *are* words which are eternal, in fact, the things which give any

modern value to the sacred writings of the past, cannot be arranged in the categories of past, present or future. They are the expression of God, and this like God is eternal and universal. It is the Word that "in the beginning" was God.

Yet even the local and accidental elements of the past have a value. "In all true religion the new rests on the old".⁹ All that we can bring to the interpretation of the present must be brought from the past, whether it be from the past of our own experience or the experience of others. This is what Confucius meant when he said that in order "to understand the present we must study the past". All sacred books are records of how men sought and found God, and for the sympathetic reader they provide much material for the understanding of the path that leads to a nobler life.

Even as God was in the searches of the past, so is he in the present. There is no "closed canon of Scripture". It is only in the narrowness and petty bigotries of man that the best things of God have an end. The gates of the Eternal are open day and night and in every age there issue from its portals prophets and saviors with tidings of great joy for all peoples. While there may be

⁹W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. vii.

nothing new under the sun, the truths of the Eternal find new expression and are a fresh inspiration every day. The Word of God is wherever man is found. Not only in our Bible, the Vedas and the Koran, but also in our modern classics. Not only in the story of David, but in the story of Adam Bede. The place that fiction occupies in the modern world compels us to open our eyes and see that much of the pure love, noble purpose and philanthropy, much of the heroism, high effort and success is due to the influence of good story-tellers.

The modern newspaper is too often ignored as a factor in the salvation of the race. It is easy to find fault with any form of literature, and there is no doubt that "yellow journalism" justifies all the blame that it has drawn upon itself. The press, however, has played and yet plays a large part in moulding mankind for good. When it is remembered that the churches reach less than thirty per cent. of the population, and that the far larger part of the other seventy per cent. are equal to the church-goers and Bible readers in their morality and good-will, we are forced to ask, from whence do they derive the good principles which produce in them such sterling characters?¹⁰ Fifty years ago we might justly have

¹⁰Cf. quotation from Dr. A. B. Bruce, ch. 9, p. 88.

tried to attribute this phenomenon of non-christian ethics to early Bible training, but to-day there are large numbers in our populations who grow up without ever coming under an adequate Christian influence. The only "Bible" that thousands read to-day is the newspaper. We therefore do not think that we exaggerate its power when we say that from the day when Egenolph Emmel¹¹ issued the first newspaper up to this hour, the high tone of society on matters that in days gone by were the special care of the church, is due to the reading of these daily and weekly journals. Their leading articles have again and again made thoughtless men think of serious things. Their attitude to crime and sin and their efforts in raising sympathy for the oppressed but adds to the evidence present with us all that much of the moral fibre of mankind is due to the words of the Eternal that have thus passed from man to man. We are not blind to the evils of the newspaper, any more than we are to those of the Sacred Books of the past. The Word of God is not a newspaper any more than it is a Bible, but in the good words that come from the innermost of every man's life, we possess elements which

¹¹1615. *Frankfurter Journal*.

are eternal, whether expressed in a leading article or a psalm.

Of the most important thing we have yet to write. Why is it that the New Testament or the Veda or a newspaper can act as "a means of grace" to the open heart? Is it not because there is something of man which is greater than any Bible? If every Bible and Sacred Book was destroyed to-morrow, all that is of any value in them we could write again. They flowed from man once, and the river of God has not ceased to flow. With us all there is a witness higher far than any printed page. We possess in ourselves all that was ever thus printed and more. Truth is not the creation of any mind, it is eternal; in the depths of our being we hold the past, present and future. All this is because man is the only word that God has clearly uttered. George Fox said that he read of Christ and God, but he knew them only from the like spirit in his own soul. Man is the best Bible. Says Emerson, "We read or remember the religious sayings and oracles of other men, whether Jew or Indian, Greek or Persian, only for friendship, only for the joy of the social identity they open to us; their words would have no weight with us if we had not the

same conviction already".¹² The prophets of the past spoke what they thought far more than what they heard. They spoke with authority and this was no quotation, it was the testimony of their souls.¹³ So to-day, unless the word of God comes from our own souls, it is untrustworthy. The word of God must ever be also the word of man. "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light that flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages." "Trust thyself—every heart vibrates to that iron string."¹⁴

¹²Speech on Free Religion, Boston, May 28, 1869. ¹³Thus Jesus is said to have taught unlike the Scribes who had such maxims as "Everyone is bound to teach with the exact words of the teacher." Cf. *Enc. Biblica*, 4327. ¹⁴R. W. Emerson "Self Reliance."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHURCHES.

"The Kingdom of God is not an imperium in imperio, but the whole of human society regarded as organized for the spiritual ends of man."—*L. P. Jacks.*

"Where there is no vision the people perish."—*Jewish Proverb.*

So far as we have gone in our reference to religion we have regarded it as an element of human life which can be traced wherever man is found. We pass now from this recognition of it as an individual function to notice its corporate or institutional manifestations.

The history of the religious instinct shows us that at different times it has been strengthened and ennobled in various persons who have appeared to man as prophets of some hitherto unsuspected or forgotten aspect of religion. Such leaders have gathered to themselves groups of sympathizers and disciples, who when strong enough have organized themselves for the attainment of their peculiar ideals. Thus in the churches we possess a number of different organizations, the reason for whose existence is not professedly the development of the religious instinct as a whole, but simply the development of that aspect of religion which they individually emphasize. It is not surprising therefore that the government

and dogmatism which enters into the formation of such organizations for their preservation should cloud and obscure the early purity of their religion. Thus not only is a Wesley the severest critic of Methodism, but "Jesus will always supply us with the best criticism of Christianity".¹

It is customary to attribute to the churches most of the honor for many of the fruits of civilization. As a matter of fact, however, we do not find that the churches are in the van of modern progress. In some cases they have helped, in most cases they have hindered. This can be illustrated in regard to two of the most important consequences of civilization, the emancipation of slaves and the exaltation of woman, the credit for both of which has been claimed by the church.

While it is true with regard to the first instance that men like Pope Clement IV, taught that "all men have the same origin * * * and the distinction of birth is only an accident", it is also true that neither pope nor council pronounced slavery to be unlawful. The churches and monasteries possessed slaves often in very large numbers. The medieval church denounced slavery only when it was the servitude of a Christian to

¹Amiel, *Journal Intime*.

a Jew or an Infidel.² It was the men who had reacted on the church's teaching about man's lost estate³ and who affirmed man's true dignity who best supported those movements that led to the emancipation of men and women.

In our second illustration the case is very much stronger against the church, so much so that it is a great marvel how such an honor ever came to be attributed to the Church. The Church has by no means been woman's best friend. The so-called virtue of celibacy is doubtless one cause for the church's treatment of woman. Lecky tells us that "celibacy was universally regarded as the highest form of virtue, and in order to make it acceptable, theologians exhausted all the resources of their eloquence in describing the iniquity of those whose charms had rendered it so rare".⁴ Every woman should remember these diatribes that she may never suppose that her present position is the result of clerical kindness.⁵

For their present freedom women have to thank

²G. P. Fisher *History of the Christian Church*, p. 232.

³Augustine attributed slavery to man's fall.

⁴Lecky, *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, pp. 77, 78.

⁵The following quotations will illustrate more forcibly the above point:

"Second marriage is a decent sort of adultery."—*Athenagoras*.

"It was no part of God's primitive design that the race should be continued by sexual union. Marriage is the outcome of sin."—*St. Gregory of Nyassa (a married bishop)*.

"Blessed is the one who leads a celibate life, and soils not the divine image within him with the filth of concupiscence.

not the churches, but the men and women who have reacted on the churches, the free-thinkers who have thought out a religion of their own. One writer who has devoted some space to this subject tells us that "it was just those who most radically abandoned Christianity—Owen, Holyoake and Mill—that were the most logical and ungrudging in their plea for women. It was the Mary Wollstonecrafts, Harriet Martineaus, Frances Wrights, George Eliots, Helen Taylors and Annie Besants that distinguished themselves by fearlessness and unselfishness. * * * The clergy never discovered any injustice to woman and only one in a thousand could see it when it was pointed out".⁶ This is the story that history tells us when she unrolls her long annals; at all times heterodox support for progress and clerical op-

Fierce is the dragon and cunning the asp, but women has the malice of both."—*St. Gregory of Nazianzum*.

"Why was woman created at all?"—*St. Augustine*.

"Thou art the devil's gate, the betrayer of the tree, the first deserter of the divine law." "Marriage is not far removed from fornication."—*Tertullian*.

"She is more fitted for bodily work . . . Remember that God took a rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul, to make her. She was not made to the image of God, like man."—

St. Ambrose.

"Woman is the root of all evil."—*St. Jerome*.

At the Council of Auxerre in 578, the bishops forbade women, on account of their "impurity," to take the sacrament in their hands as men did.

"A necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill is woman."—*St. Chrysostom*.

⁶Jos. McCabe, *The Religion of Women*, 105, 107.

position.⁷ Even when theology herself has advanced and individual thinkers have courageously and honestly opened their hearts and minds to the churches, the same opposition has been met. "If we may judge from the treatment accorded at different periods to such scientific theologians as Bishop Colenso, Professor Robertson Smith and Abbé Loisy, it would appear that the point at which theology becomes scientific is the precise point at which the churches refuse to give it countenance."⁸

Having thus indicated the general relation of the churches towards human progress, it is no surprise that there exists at the present day an ever widening gulf between the churches and the people. Smaller and smaller every year becomes the interest in the Church. A century ago the churches were full and every pew had its regular family. But how changed are the times! The late Dr. A. B. Bruce is able to write, "I am disposed to think that a great and steadily increasing portion of the moral worth of society lies outside of the organized churches, not by godlessness, but rather by exceptional moral earnestness"⁹ And Professor Max Müller over twenty-

⁷Exception must be made to such fine clerics as Charles Kingsley. ⁸Prof. L. P. Jacks, *Hibbert Journal*, v: 10.

⁹Quoted in *Hibbert Journal*, iv: 846.

years ago wrote to a friend the following, which even when allowance is made for broad statement is yet very serious. He says that "materialism in the most general sense of the word, ought to produce selfishness, and therefore immorality. But as a matter of fact, looking about among my friends, and back to what history teaches us, it is not so. Materialists are mostly serious-minded and moral men, while the greatest amount of immorality meets us among those who are most orthodox in their religious opinions, most regular in their attendance at church and most shocked at the opinions of Darwin and Huxley".¹⁰ It is the knowledge of facts like these that is causing thoughtful men and women to question the right of the church to exist. The workers, the masses of the people and the intellectual classes are already alienated from the churches and even where they do attend, there is no vital connection with their conduct.¹¹ Only in lands where education is absent or in its earliest stages is church attendance large and the religion of the church a factor influencing the people.¹² The reason for this is doubtless the fact that these communities through

¹⁰F. Max Müller, *Life and Letters*, ii: 202.

¹¹Cf. Vivian's *The Churches and Modern Thought*, 6-17.

¹²In the small settlements of Newfoundland, the author spent three years, and found that large church attendance was often due to a fear that if they went not "something might happen."

lack of adequate education live in a past world. The whole atmosphere of their life is of a century ago, and the church which so often stands for the past thus satisfies their needs.

In saying that the church is a voice from the past more than from the present we have indicated one of the causes of the present alienation of the progressives of our modern populations. All thoughtful men and women have consciously and unconsciously been moving forward to better and saner estimations of life. Of God and religion they think different to their fathers; thus whenever they see the old trying to perpetuate itself they are instantly and instinctively repelled.

The impression received from most churches to-day is little different from the impression that might have been obtained a century ago. They yet speak of a God who is absolutely transcendent, a God who needs to be courted and praised, who will become petulant unless we thank him, who will be slighted unless we pray to him, The God who demands worship is not the God of to-day. The men and women of this age cannot stand in a church and reveal their religious emotions in the language of Watts, Wesley or Sankey; and if church attendance requires that they should, they let the church alone and seek some-

thing less in the atmosphere of the past. "If the churches choose to stand alone, society will leave them in their sublime isolation and go on its own business in its own way. Society in the twentieth century differs from that of the thirteenth in having moral resources in itself which render it independent of any single section in the pursuit of the Highest Good. It is just because of their failure to see this that the churches are losing their position in the race of human progress."¹³

Not only is it the anachronistic position of the churches which is a cause of their failure, but they are served by persons who in many cases make their salvation seem impossible. It is significant of much when we occasionally hear of three sexes: men, women and parsons. This is not all sarcasm, for it is true that one cause of empty pews is empty pulpits. Says one wise man, "it takes more than flesh and blood to fill a pulpit". The pulpit and the platform, whether of church or lecture hall, calls for fullness of moral conviction, honest and independent thought. Every congregation demands "something to think about", and in the very near future there will be no place for the minister who fails to supply it. There is much for which the churches

¹³Prof. L. P. Jacks, *Hibbert Journal*, v: 17.

could stand to-day, if only they would awake to the fact that they are in the twentieth century. There are hopes to be restored, there are wrongs to be righted, there is a need for the vision that hath ever preserved us. Scribism is yet the curse of the ministry, so few are speaking with authority. We do not want to know what the patriarchs believed; we do not care what your creed teaches; we are not even greatly concerned over what Jesus is supposed to have thought, but we do want to know what you believe.

In all estimations we make with regard to the church of the future we should consider one very important thing with reference to the church of the present. The State and other agencies are slowly acquiring the functions of the church and the division between sacred and secular is gradually being abolished.

This movement in some respects is a return to the ancient idea of a state, in that religion is included within it. The present, but passing, divorce of state and church was doubtless due to the refusal of Christianity to be a national religion. All tendencies point now however to "a political system endowed with the power of the

historic state and the love of the historic church''.¹⁴

With a few examples this tendency may be shown. In the first place, it is to be noticed that education which in the past was a function of the church is now in the hands of the state. That this will be universally true in the future hardly any can doubt, seeing that even in the strongholds of Catholicism the Catholics are demanding schools that shall be controlled by the temporal power.

In the matter of charity we receive a second illustration. Although church relief is by no means abandoned, state relief far exceeds it. With the growing weakness of the church there will also be a decrease in her ability to give. State relief has been a nameless horror to many, but, though it does not affect our example, it must be added, that it tends to become less so, for greater wisdom and sympathy are depriving it of its old terrors.

Further examples could be given to show how the state has become the poor man's friend, which cares for all his welfare; also that the criminal and morally defective are dealt with in a paternal way, not with a view to revenge, but with

¹⁴Edward O. Sisson in the *International Journal of Ethics*, vol. xvii: 346, to whom I am indebted also for some of the examples which follow.

the religious view of reformation. The world tends to become the future church, excommunicated, she has produced a new and nobler communion.

It is very evident to us from all that we have already seen that the present policy and nature of the churches tend to destroy them. It needs not that any campaign should be started against them; where they fail to adapt themselves, they will naturally perish. That they have served their purpose in the progress of the world, no fair critic will deny. Much of the leavening of the world with high ideals is due to the church. This is as it should be. "The purpose of the church in the world is to make the church unnecessary."¹⁵ Such institutions do not pass away as the result of any abolition theory or infidel attack, but unconsciously as society becomes receptive to better things. Thus does history teach us that "the success of any opinion depended much less upon the force of its arguments or the ability of its advocates, than upon the predisposition of society to receive it and that predisposition resulted from the intellectual type of the age".¹⁶ All that is true of the manner in which the new era comes, is also true of the way in which the old goes. With-

¹⁵Rev R. J. Campbell. ¹⁶Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism, etc.*, i: vi.

out noise does the sun drop below the hills, and without noise does the dawn arrive. The kingdom of God never comes with observation.

The church of the past existed to "call out,"¹⁷ a peculiar people unto God, the church of the future exists to call on all people to God. "Religion was once the pillar of fire which went before the human race in its great march through history, showing it the way." Now it has assumed "the role of the ambulance which follows in the rear and picks up the exhausted and the wounded. This too is a great work, but it is not sufficient". The world calls for leaders; the darkness of materialism has come over the hearts of many, and louder than ever is the cry for men who have the vision, men who see something and can tell others what they see.

There is no need to see anything tragic in the falling off of interest in the services of the organized church. In the future the organized church will not pretend to meet the needs of all, but will exist for the instruction and refreshment of those souls who feel the poetry and beauty of its services. We look for no one organization that can be a sovereign balm for all our wounds, but we do expect the whole of mankind to spend themselves in the service of their fellows, and

¹⁷ "ἐκκλησία"

show by their works that the world is the church. Neighborliness more than saintliness will be the future watchword. If preachers and sermons pass away we shall never be without those prophets whose words of the eternal life have ever cheered man on, and led us to those things that never perish.

There shall be no closed avenue to the spirit of man. The esthetic instinct which compels so many to worship in grand old churches whose creeds they hate, the social instinct which lies at the basis of all religion, the "little plant called reverence", which many an Oliver Wendell Holmes yet goes to church to water, will all be cared for; no path which God has trodden but will be open to all who will serve him in the service of others. The universe will be consecrated and wherever a human soul is found will be holy ground. Every good man and woman we meet will be our minister and the duty of every such minister will be simply to remind us by word or action of those things which are unseen and eternal that in all our experiences we may give ourselves to a life of good will.

CHAPTER X.

THE REGENERATION OF SOCIETY.

"It is better to be lost than saved alone."—*Amiel*.

"There is no greater curse to posterity than that of bequeathing them an increasing population of imbeciles, idlers and criminals."—*H. Spencer*.

All our dreams of religious and social reconstruction, of utopias and earthly golden ages will be futile and even cowardly if we do not take into account the sad, hard facts of much of our modern social life. In all our optimism concerning a world becoming a church and all men professing but one religion it would be foolish to ignore the things which above all hinder the fulfilment of our dreams. The causes of pessimism must be considered to make our optimism sane.

At the outset of the chapter it should be stated that we do not propose to outline some plan of salvation, or even to state connectedly some scheme whereby "the submerged tenth" or "the people of the abyss", shall be raised to honorable citizens. The stating of such things is the work of the specialist, and many such schemes of more or less perfection are to-day being worked out in theory and in practice by numbers of earnest, large-souled sociologists.

Our object is the more modest one of gathering

together a few thoughts concerning things of which it seems necessary to write, to so draw attention to them that in the social ideals of religious people, they may be less overlooked. One chief purpose as already hinted is to help place our optimism and pessimism on a basis of facts.

We are not required to agree as to our remedies, for that, it can hardly be said, the time has yet arrived. Many of what seem to some the best remedies are yet untried. Here and there are reformers whose reforms fail to appeal to the age and thus fail to obtain support. The future is ever the world of the reformer and in some respects he becomes by his ideals more a citizen of that day than of the present.

Although not asked at present to agree in our solutions of the problems, every one is under obligation to think and work for solutions which time and experience will eventually test. As the years pass, it will doubtless be that some things said here will be found foolish and inadequate, other things we hope will be found true. Our desire is not that the heavens and earth should pass away, rather than one jot or tittle of our words should be destroyed. Rather with every real seeker of Truth would we say that "it does not matter who is right, but only what is right".

The day is now rapidly closing when religious

teachers expect God to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, to exact purity of life from those who were born and reared in corruption. If, as one writer says, "lust and brutality are generated as certainly as scrofula and typhus", it is because from earliest years little children breathe the immoral atmosphere of the brothels and saloons. The religious heart of to-day has once and for all bidden farewell to a God that could damn those whose chances for religious evolution were so hard. Rather is it filled with an infinite pity for all such, and a keen sense of the mystery that they also are the children of a good God. There is no need to play to our pessimism by detailing here how many thousand beautiful young lives are shamed and degraded every year in our cities, how many thousand boys and girls are born unloved and unwanted, how many thousand men and women annually drop through vice and crime to ignoble graves. These things exist far too vividly for the faith of some, that we may content ourselves with observing that every true worker feels the horror of it intensely. Even such men as General Booth, whose lives are built on faith in man and God, write and tell us that "There are some cases within our knowledge which seem to confirm the dreadful verdict by which a man appears to be a lost soul on this

side of the grave".¹ The recognition of the various influences that help to degrade a man so that he becomes "a lost soul" is to-day causing men to ask, "What proportion of the blame of my sin is mine, is my ancestors', is my environment's, is God's?" and among those who do not probe the deepest into men's motives, there is an increasing tendency to pass the sentence of "not guilty" on the sinners of the age. We say this is so among those who judge superficially, for it seems to us that although what we *are* may have been determined, what we *may be* is yet in our power. Robert Blatchford, who is one of the most militant of modern Determinists, has himself said, "I believe that I am what heredity and environment made me, but I know that I can make myself better or worse if I try". The determining power we grant to others before us and around us, we should never refuse to ourselves.

Doubtless the very best answer to give to those who worry as to where the blame for their sin belongs, is to tell them not to concern themselves any more about the matter. "The less we have to do with our sins the better." Let others apportion the blame, if such apportionment is ever necessary.

In a study, however, such as we have here

Darkest England, v: §10.

chosen, it is necessary for us to recognize that ancestry and environment have a great deal to do with the sin of society. There are at least two distinct methods of regeneration that can be followed in dealing with the curses of heredity, one the method of cure, the other of prevention. Although it is a matter of proverbial philosophy that the latter is better than the former, it is the former that is yet followed by most of those institutions such as churches and settlements, which exist for the salvation of the unfit. It would be foolish to deny that this method had not met with success, the testimony of thousands of men and women who have grappled with their evil star and have breasted the blows of circumstance and have conquered, forms a strong witness to the good that has been done, and an even stronger witness to that individual determinism which such a method naturally presupposes.

Good as it has been to cure, we have long felt that it was not the best; it leaves much to be desired. All the educating and religious influences leave a certain large percentage untouched. There are thousands who ever sacrifice the future good to present pleasure, to whom sensual passion is ever of more importance than the possession of sane and healthy children. When in such instances the value of a higher mode of living is rejected or

ignored, there should be no alternative allowed between prevention and cure; they should not be permitted to have descendants. It is a matter of honor to the modern idealist that in the formation of his home, quality is judged as far superior to quantity. All official warnings about "race suicide" find in him no response; rather is he willing to do all in his power to instruct and help those who are bringing undesirable citizens into the world, to be sterile. In this connection we have no hesitation in quoting with approval the words of H. G. Wells, that "To make life convenient for the breeding of such people will seem to the citizens of the future, not the most virtuous and amiable thing in the world, as it is held to be now, but an exceedingly abominable proceeding. * * * The procreation of children, who by the circumstances of their parentage *must* be diseased bodily or mentally is absolutely the most loathsome of all conceivable sins".²

It is not our purpose, neither is this the place, to explain in detail the ways and means of accomplishing this preventive measure; such things are being worked out by our modern sociologists and the practice of the various methods can alone

²*Anticipations of the Reaction of the Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought*, page 324.

determine that which is the best to come into general use.³

We shall feel that more is accomplished if here we are able to remove any of the prejudices that so often, among religious people, exist against these methods. In order that our sentiments shall be on the progressive side, it is well to remind ourselves at this point of the cost of such a reform. Before estimating it, however, let us recall the cost of our present condition of things. To-day we allow any man and woman to marry and beget children, no matter how diseased they may be morally, mentally and physically. We do this, it is said, to save our morality and for it, as for every other curse that we wish continued, we do not hesitate to quote the authority of the so-called Word of God.⁴ "The essential aspect of all this wild and windy business of the sexual relation is, after all, births. The pre-eminent value of sexual questions in morality lies in the fact that the lives that will constitute the future are involved."⁵ Thus the greatest immorality

³In Indiana a new method has recently been introduced, a new operation called "vasectomy" being used instead of castration. Inmates of the Indiana Reformatory to the number of 223 have thus been treated, 217 of them willingly. "Dr. Sharpe strongly urged the application of the law to all imbeciles and degenerate criminals who are prolific and whose defects are transmissible"—Vide "Report of Prison Congress" in *Charities and the Commons*, xviii: 26.

⁴Cf. 1 Cor. vii: 9. ⁵H. G. Wells *Anticipation of Reaction*, etc., p. 328.

under our present system, is that little boys and girls are coming into the world loaded down with curses, their chances of survival damned by a new kind of original sin. This time man is responsible, not the God of some old theology, and because it is man, the sermons against him are few. To prevent this we must reconcile ourselves to what has been termed "a sterile immorality", for certainly our choice is between a prolific morality (!) and a sterile immorality. Let it be added, however, that the greatest part of the cost of this latter is initiatory, the "running expenses" are small, which is in great contrast to the former, of which the cost is increasing every year. To those who have been nurtured in the so-called strict morality of the old schools, our suggestion may seem horrible. If for one moment, however, consideration is given to the slumfuls of care-worn, miserably diseased children and their cruel and negligent parents, and it is remembered the darkness and crime that these young lives will spread in the future, surely it is time for us to call for a stricter morality.

Let those who read, think; let those who think, speak; and let all who speak, speak from the full heart that feels the sorrows and sins of mankind. Let there be no halo about such reforms but the

halo of pity and let the human voice be dropped to a whisper while it tells of the falls of man, and let his fall but tell of his greatness. "It is only as a lost being that man appears truly great. Judge him by the ruin he makes, wander among the shattered pillars and fallen towers of his majesty, behold the immortal and eternal vestiges, study his passions, thoughts, aspirations, woes; behold the destruction and misery that are in his ways—destruction how sublime, misery how deep, clung to with how great pertinacity, and then say,—this is man, this is the dignity of human nature."⁶ But hail the glad day, which we feel cannot be very far away, when every lad and lass can speak of a home with pride, when the prattle of children shall be the sweetest music on earth and when each one shall begin the battle of life with a clean body, a clean mind and a clean heart!

After we have dealt with the problem of heredity we are yet faced by that of environment, the remedying of which however is more within our power than that which we have just considered. Occasionally it is said, though less frequently than of old, that if you educate a child and endeavor by means of the Church and other such

⁶Dr. Horace Bushnell, sermon on "Dignity of human nature shown from its ruins."

influences to protect him, his environment will correct itself. There is no doubt a great deal of truth in this contention, its fault is that it is one-sided. The other side declares that if you change the environment the envired will change himself. The truth is that both call for a change. Much as a city missionary might believe in what he would term "the grace of God to save", he would never be so foolish as to allow his children to be born and trained in the slums, playing in the gutters, and for their first sixteen years hearing profanity every hour and learning vice every day. Too well has his work convinced him that environment counts for a great deal in a child's chances for success in the living of the good life.

The first step towards altering the environment of the children who are thus handicapped is to educate public feeling regarding the rights of the child. It is the duty of every democratic institution to step in and say to parents whose children are being nurtured in an immoral atmosphere, "You are trespassing on your children's rights, and it is our duty to do what you either cannot or will not do". Some system of enforced emigration from the cities to the country would in most cases reveal those who really neglected their children and those who by the limitations of the slum and their conditions were unable to

do what they desired. To-day we deprive parents of their children if they neglect or abuse them; the day is not far distant when those who allow their boys and girls to be tainted with the atmosphere of saloons and brothels will also have to forfeit their right to care for them.

In speaking of the salvation of the boys and girls, on whom be it remembered depends the realization of our ideals, one important factor, often strangely neglected, calls for a few words. Many charitably disposed persons imagine that they have met their obligations to the child they help to save from an evil environment, when they have seen the child safely lodged in some asylum or institution. There is a greater obligation unfulfilled. The child's right is to a home and to a real home, not an institution.⁷ Noble and good as are the large majority of these institutions, they belong to a *stage* only in the evolution of society. No institution, however good, can be a home, in the proper sense of that word; its institutional character, its rules and regulations and official control deprive it of those free and loving influences that lay at the foundation of much of our best civilization. The pure, kindly intercourse of the home has ever given us our highest

⁷Cf. the wise words of the late Geo. Macdonald towards the close of his *Robert Falconer*.

life, and to-day in the hearts of our best reformers, there is a great longing for the day when every childless home in the land shall contain at least two little ones who need a home that under their rightful and normal conditions they may develop to true manhood and womanhood. Our expectancy is not the blind optimism that all will thus reach the highest, but rather that all shall have an equal chance.

At the outset of our chapter we said that it was not our intention to write a connected treatise on our subject, but simply to indicate a few things often neglected. For this reason it must not be imagined that we are unaware that the palace and the mansion need regeneration as much as the slum, that the fire of sensuality is as strong among the rich as the poor, and that rich mothers are not exempt from the charge of neglecting their children. It is only too true and the remedies for this part of the problem are not dissimilar from those already mentioned.

We must not omit to mention before we close this chapter the modern vitiating custom of giving an importance to crime. Much of our crime is provoked by this strange custom of publishing for general reading the darkest or foulest sins of the day. This relic of barbarism is seen worst in what is termed the "yellow press", for this

abuse of journalism is responsible for many of the "crime waves" that periodically come over our cities. We allow the advertisement of crimes with all their loathsome details, so that the poison stimulates those who are most receptive to evil to the performance of like deeds, and at the same time it taints thousands of pure minds by its vile instruction.

We are only now beginning to understand the criminal. His crime is a weakness and a sign of insanity.⁸ The moment the truth of this is impressed upon the would-be criminal the halo around the unlawful act vanishes, crime is robbed of its chief glory. When the brains of fifty criminals have been examined and imperfections found in all, we are quite willing to agree with Dr. Lydston that "vice and crime will one day be shown more definitely than ever to be a matter to be dealt with by medical science rather than by the law".⁹ When sin is shown to be more a weakness of the brain than of the soul, man will be more ashamed of it. No man likes to be thought mentally weak, it provokes the dormant manhood

⁸"Dr. McEwen, of Glasgow, relates in the *Lancet* how a laborer, after falling on his head from a scaffolding, developed immoral tendencies. A tumor had formed on his brain. This was successfully removed by trepanning, and the immoral tendency disappeared."—Quoted from Vivian's *Churches and Modern Thought*, 334.

⁹*The Diseases of Society*, p. 221.

within him, and that is what our present system largely fails to do. "Crime and bad lives will soon be the measure of a State's failure."¹⁰ This is but another call for the rational method stated at the beginning of our chapter that prevention is better than cure, for only when we decide that it is a sign of greater spirituality to prevent these things, even at the cost of life, than to pray and work for the salvation of those who already are lost to our present power, shall we succeed in possessing a national desire to

"Ring out the slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws."

¹⁰H. G. Wells *A Modern Utopia*, p. 144.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH.

"The righteous shall live by faith."—*The Bible*.

"We are like children playing on the sea-shore while the great ocean of truth lies undiscovered before us."—*Newton*.

There is hardly another subject that calls more loudly for definition than that of faith. When we remember that one of our historic books on religion says, "If any man wills to be saved, without doubt it is necessary for him to hold the true *faith* or perish everlastingly", we at once are aware of a wide and influential use of this term which is altogether out of harmony with the reality.

Having begun to show what faith is not, we may continue that our appreciation of the reality may be the stronger. It is the faith that is synonymous with creed that has to the minds of the uninstructed given an evil color to the word "infidel."¹ An infidel is never a man without faith, but only a man who has not been faithful to *the* faith, that is, the creed.

Another spurious form of faith is seen when it appears as a euphemism for unwillingness to think. There are yet a large number of people

¹Latin, *in-fidelis*.

who like to receive their religion from others, and who consequently are glad to use any traditional foundation so long as it does not call for any effort from them.

Again, faith often appears as a cowardly shrinking from facts. It is because of this spurious form that so many seem to be able to live a long life, without ever coming to a point when, to save from a horrible pessimism, faith becomes an absolute necessity. Many religious people keep a kind of "Index Expurgatorius", whereby only such facts are allowed to come to their notice that will not disturb the equilibrium of their feelings nor destroy their joys. Such people often say plainly that they do not want to believe anything new, if it deprives them of any sense of security they may have had in the old. The creed of their conduct most clearly is that, where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise.

The definition of the early christian writer that faith is the conviction of the reality of things unseen,² can hardly be surpassed. It only needs illustration to make it perfectly clear to the simplest mind. Faith is no easy condition, for it is a constant protest against those things that seem

²Cf. Heb. xi: 1.

most evident, it is really the greatest effort of the human spirit.

The scientist who would live without faith has a terrible creed. It contains far more damnatory clauses than that of Athanasius, and it preaches far more "hell-fire sermons" than the most ardent of old time ministers. No scientist can be content with "nature red in tooth and claw"; he has to believe *also* in a Nature good and tender of heart. In illustration of this we have the notable case of Professor Ernst Haeckel. It is customary to speak of him as a materialist,³ but his monism is not complete without idealism. He writes in one place, "In order to compass these high aims, it is of the first importance that modern science not only shatter the false structures of superstition and sweep their ruins from the path, but that it also erect a new abode for human emotion on the ground it has cleared—a 'palace of reason', in which under the influence of our new monistic views, we do reverence to the real trinity of the nineteenth century—the trinity of the true, the good and the beautiful".⁴ What warrant more than faith's warrant has the professor for assuming the worthiness of the true, the good and the beautiful? His materialism is

³Even a materialist is working by faith if he assumes that "matter" is the ultimate reality. ⁴Cf. *Life and Matter*, by Sir O. Lodge, p. 81.

only theoretical, while we have every reason to think that his idealism is also practical, it being the rule of his life.

Many a thinker like Haeckel joins in the pursuit of truth so earnestly that for a time faith seems to be denied. Contrary to the easy going religious people mentioned above who count happiness to be greater than truth, the earnest seeker declares that if anything is not true to him, it has to go even though his whole universe of joy should go with it. If there is rest for the credulous, there is life for the faithful, their faith being nourished by the sweat of mind and heart.

The consequence of such earnest searching for religious truth is very frequently agnosticism. Each traveler arrives at the border of the knowable and finds that most if not all of the objects that he sought lay beyond the border in the unknowable. On the road from dogmatism to faith, agnosticism is a very good inn to "put up" at. To tarry awhile at this stage of the journey is most beneficial, in that it eradicates from our system the last roots of dogmatism, and thus gives to us a more charitable relation to those who differ from us. We should never allow the wisdom we learn at this inn to depart from us; had the early christians remembered this, the word "faith" would never have been transformed into

the word "creed". As we proceed we shall notice that a rather large part of true faith is made from agnosticism.

That we may distinguish better the relation of faith to opinion and knowledge we cannot do better than quote the very clear statement which is given to us by Kant. He writes, "Holding for true * * * has the three following degrees:—Opinion, Belief and Knowledge. Opinion is a consciously insufficient judgment, subjectively as well as objectively. *Belief* is subjectively sufficient, but is recognized as being objectively insufficient. Knowledge is both subjectively and objectively sufficient".⁵ Faith, therefore, is a rational subjective feeling, while the agnosticism of faith is seen in that it recognizes an insufficiency of objective evidence, concerning that which it believes. When it is said that belief is subjectively sufficient, we are to understand that faith is of the nature of "a sentiment, a hope, an instinct".⁶ Thus in no case can faith, which is a subjective feeling, be a test of objective truth. Faith may be as Amiel says "certitude without proofs", but it must be only concerning things that cannot be proved. In saying this we clearly indicate the separate realms of science and religion.

⁵*Critique of Pure Reason*, Max Müller's, Tr., II, 705.

⁶Cf. Amiel's *Journal*, Feb. 7th, '72.

They are not necessarily antagonistic; rather does the latter complement the former.

We are now beginning to see that unbelief, is not incompatible with faith. As one has said, often "by faith we disbelieve"; certain it is that when we view the lives of the world's great sceptics, we are forced to declare that

"There lives more faith in honest doubt
* * * than in half the creeds."

Faith, from its very nature, ever implies a doubt. Like agnosticism it says, on its negative side, "I do not know". It confesses that objectively it has not only insufficient evidence, but in some cases a great deal of contradictory evidence concerning the reality of its object. But the strength of faith does not lie in its negations, but in its positive declarations based upon the seemingly ineradicable instincts of human nature. Thus agnosticism is the wrong side of faith, though it should be added that most agnostics are only such theoretically. If like Emerson we look to their conduct to discover their creed, we shall ever find that in practice they are men of faith. Agnosticism is not the antagonist of faith, but only of dogmatism. Practical materialism is the only real enemy of faith; this is the foe which the faith of all religions has ever sought to overthrow.

Faith does not ask to know the unknowable.

Once it cried, "Tell me thy Name", but as no answer came, it has since been listening to the whispers of the best in the human heart and up to the present it has heard sufficient to trust the rest. It declares from this day forward that it holds

"it a nobler thing to sail
Over an unknown sea,
Than to pray to God to rend the veil
That shrouds the mystery".

If as we have said, the basis of faith is instinct or feeling, the question arises, can we trust it? Are we not ever declaring how untrustworthy are the feelings? Do they form sufficient a foundation for our theory of the universe? Hardly. Real faith must be instructed faith, it must be nourished by all the knowledge obtainable. Faith must not only be a theory, but a working theory; it must give us more confidence the more we follow it. Bradley⁷ has passed the opinion that "Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct". Whatever truth there is here, and many will judge that there is some, it seems well to us to say that faith is the finding of *good reasons* for that which we believe upon instinct. The man who lives the good life, though he is unable to demonstrate *why* he

⁷In the preface of his "Appearance and Reality."

should so live, possesses a growing conviction as he lives, that this universe, with all its strange, seemingly non-ethical purposes, is organized to vindicate righteousness. His faith is his surrender to that belief, subjectively sufficient, objectively insufficient. Declaring as we do, therefore, that our faith must be rational, it can never mean believing the impossible. Miracles and supernaturalism are often rejected by men of faith, for the simple reason that such things are not objects of faith. The resurrection of Jesus, although the Pope's last syllabus is to the contrary,⁸ is not an object for faith, but an object for historical and literary enquiry. We may define the domain of faith yet more closely by saying that if every evidence of this supposed event had disappeared, it would not make it an object for faith. Faith is not required in a case of lost evidence, but where evidence has not been completely gained. History never harms real faith. To-day we have a great deal of evidence that enables us to trace the evolution of the ideas of God and immortality; but faith in these is not made less strong because we know how they have grown in the human consciousness. The whole of our contention on this point is this, that no intelligent man of faith demands that faith shall

⁸Cf. translation in *Open Court*, Vol. xxi: No. 617.

have the first place. "Faith should only be allowed the second place, for faith has a judge—in truth. When she exalts herself to the position of supreme judge the world is enslaved: Christianity from the fourth to the seventeenth century, is the proof of it." ⁹

"In the fitness of time it may be possible to hold beliefs with intelligence as well as with conviction",¹⁰ but meanwhile the great undemonstrable truths of our life must be met by faith. Feelings may be untrustworthy, but not wholly so, they call for full recognition; it certainly is unscientific to brush their evidence aside as useless. Feeling does not pretend to be a proof, but puts in its modest claim as the evidence of one part, and a very essential part, of man. True science has not only to deal with "nature red in tooth and claw", but it has to consider a Thomas Huxley, who in tears can declare to a friend, to whose religious experience he had listened, that he wished he could say the same, but could not.

We have already hinted that the worship of the true, the good and the beautiful partakes of the nature of faith. It is for us to note here that as soon as these are declared to have objective value, and called God, and the goodness of God

⁹Amiel, *Journal*, Feb. 7, '72. ¹⁰Carveth Read, *Metaphysics of Nature*.

is made to imply immortality, Haeckel draws back. In his position as described by his disciple Joseph McCabe,¹¹ we are told that he rejects the idea of an intelligent and beneficent guidance and fails to see any evidence for exempting the human mind from the general law of dissolution. It is our attitude here that will distinguish between the agnostic and the man of faith. The agnostic and the man of faith can both accept Haeckel's statement. Yes, the man of faith knows all about the failure of the theistic arguments, he knows how hard it is to believe that the world is guided by a loving hand. He also sees no evidence that will satisfy his mind that man is exempt from the general law of dissolution and is immortal. With Haeckel he also can have "an abiding and keen consciousness of the darker side of the world process", but while accepting all this as true, he does not find that it provides him and mankind generally with a working theory of life. Seemingly it does not provide Haeckel with a working theory of life, or why all this about the good, the true and the beautiful? Every brave, unflinching thinker—and Haeckel is one—comes to a point where a choice is given him, he can do one of two things, and in each case have just as much reason for his

¹¹*Hibbert Journal*, No. 12, p. 748.

action. He can accept a plus or a minus. He either accepts life and adds his best to it and thinks his best of it, or he can go the way of the pessimist and make his keen consciousness of the darker side of the world process, the only consciousness, and go on subtracting from every good, true and beautiful thing that which makes it such, until his very life is hell. It needs faith to deal with the *Welt-Räthsel*. The purest joys and the noblest actions come from belief in a good power behind phenomena.

"A religious creed must always reach further into the unknown than science has yet explored. It must be of the nature of speculation, based upon ineradicable instincts in the human mind, and on experience of a kind not easily stated and not fully realizable except by those who have felt it."¹²

It is worth noticing before we close this chapter that pessimism is not the only reaction against real faith; in another direction we find that many try to solve the riddle of the universe with the old dualism. Unwilling to grant the insolubility of the problem of evil, they are forced back on the old hypothesis of a personal devil.¹³ Only when the good and evil are divided between God

¹²Sir O. Lodge, *Hibbert Journal*, No 16, p 726. ¹³Ch. xiv. of *Pro Fide*, does this cf Vivian's *Churches and Modern Thought*, p. 265.

and the devil are they satisfied. Unwilling to treat immortality as the soul's great hope, they go back to a so-called special revelation granted the world in the resuscitation of Jesus, and this is put forward as a proof, forgetting that a proof which itself cannot be proved is useless.

Faith refuses both the goal of pessimism and that of traditionalism. It does not desire to systematize¹⁴ so much as to attain the highest ideals. A man's first duty is to be true, not to be consistent. Faith says that it *knows* the cosmic process, but *believes* in God, *knows* things seen, but *believes* in things as yet unseen and possesses a growing conviction of their reality. Faith is to "always send the heart a little farther than the eyes."¹⁵

¹⁴Systematization in religion is a sign of decay. It is museum work, the labeling of dead matter. ¹⁵A. C. Benson.

CHAPTER XII.

HEALTHY-MINDEDNESS.

"If a man would hasten towards the good, he should keep his thought away from evil."—*The Dhammapada*.

"He who sustains and disciplines his soul and embraces unity cannot be deranged."—*Lao-tze*.

One of the gravest accusations ever brought against religion charges it with tending to insanity, in fact, some extremists have even affirmed it to be a form of madness. In most instances, it has been against some religious genius that the charge has been made, rather than against the rank and file of their followers. In this respect, however, the religious genius does not stand alone, although he may have aggravated the case against his fellows. We say this because some recent writers have found a pathological cause for genius. "Genius", says Lombroso, "is a symptom of hereditary degeneration of the epileptoid variety and is allied to moral insanity." "The greater genius", says another writer, "the greater the unsoundness".¹ We are not concerned to prove or disprove these bold statements, but only to remark that the observation of some kind of

¹J. F. Nisbet, *The Insanity of Genius*, xxiv. Both statements are quoted in Prof. James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 16, 17.

religious facts must have given rise to the theory. If the religious spirit had always been manifested in sane, healthy ways, it would hardly have occurred to men to treat it as a form of insanity. We have seen reason to remark earlier in the book, that some of the manifestations of religion in the Gospels go beyond the borderland of sanity. When, also, the mind reflects upon the fascinating, yet, withal, abnormal manifestations that are recorded in the mediæval period of church history, it is no great surprise that men should speak of religion as an insanity. It seems to us also that the recent lectures of Professor James on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, have only helped to propagate this opinion. It may be that he has a "case" for religious experience, but as one critic has said, he has spoilt it by seeking to prove too much. He has unintentionally provided for "the robust Philistine type" another strong weapon whereby to attack the supernaturalism he tries to explain.² His position, which seems to be, that the abnormal life admits of a nearer approach to God,³ is, however, not held by him alone. Theoretically, its supporters may be few, but practically they are Legion. It

²Cf. Vivian, *Churches and Modern Thought*, 253, 254. ³"Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal physical visitations."—*Varieties etc.*, p. 6.

is this fact which supplies us with our reason for considering among our studies one upon healthy-mindedness.

Our purpose is not to deal with those abnormalities which are so often attacked and ridiculed by the so-called anti-religious:—"the exalted emotional sensibility", "the discordant inner life", "the melancholy", "the hearing of voices and seeing of visions",—but only to take into account those unnatural elements that more generally afflict the average church-going man and woman. Most of the ill-health in modern religion calls for more common sense, rather than nerve tonics.

The first great commandment in a healthy religion is, be natural, and the second is like unto it, be yourself. To have been told this when the dogma of total depravity influenced the thought of men, would have sounded the same as, be a brute or a devil, but the modern growth of the religious consciousness makes such an interpretation impossible. We should be natural because God is natural. As soon as we cease to be natural, no matter whether our condition is spoken of as unnatural or supernatural, we are unlike God. One of the chief reasons for unnaturalness in modern religious life is that many repress and stunt those powers and characteristics, which, because they are peculiarly their own, can best be used

for the good of others. They do not insist on themselves. A sane and proper individualism is necessary to and should be the fruit of a sane and proper socialism. They are complementary, not antagonistic. Thus, when we affirm that we should insist on ourselves, and watch that gleam of light that flashes through our own mind more than all the suns and meteors in the firmament of saints and sages, we are but indicating something in which the very success of such a social part of our nature as the religious should consist. After trying to become what others would have us become, let us try and become ourselves.

It is very seldom, if ever, that there can exist for any individual an absolute master, just as rarely as any master should find an absolute disciple. Yet it is taken for granted by many that the ideals of one person can become common property. The natural failures of these people who are so susceptible to the lives of others, becomes a fruitful source of morbidness in religion. The convert is full of remorse because he does not possess the feelings of John Bunyan as expressed in "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners". The young missionary is sad and self-accusing because he has not the concern for the heathen that David Brainerd possessed, or the heroism of David Livingstone. The mystical soul is tor-

tured by an unnatural conscience because the voices, visions and ecstasies of a Tauler, a Suso or a Jacob Behmé are never experienced. All are sad because of the unhealthy desire to be other than they are fitted to become. The ideal democracy contains no master or disciple, but every one true to the law of his own being. The true saint has the law of God written on his heart. The world about us only gains when from *within* our lives, we can produce something for the welfare of others. Even Trafalgars are not won because "England expects every man to do his duty", but because every man expects this of himself. Every man, as we have already seen, has his religion, and it is a natural religion, the result of many and varied influences, but of the influences that made him. The law of our own being is the only law that is absolutely sacred to us. This is no declaration of anarchy as popularly understood, for there is within us a subtle, evasive, undefined element which never yet has compromised with sin, and no law is sacred which does not recognize and include this spark from the gods. The philosophy of the Upanishads is the great preacher of this part of our modern religion. "God, the sole Author of all good in us, is not as in the Old Testament a being contrasted with and distinct from us, but rather--

without impairing his absolute antagonism to the depraved self of experience (jiva)—our own metaphysical I, our divine self, persisting in untarnished purity through all the aberrations of human nature, eternally blessed,—in a word, our âtman.”⁴ A healthy religion is a natural religion, and because natural, a personal religion.

The next thing to be considered in this chapter is “the consciousness of sin”. It has become almost proverbially characteristic of a certain kind of Christian saintship that there should be an acute sense of sin. The evangelical hymn well expresses the thought of these saints, when it says,

“And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of sin within.”

Even Strauss is quoted as saying that, “In proportion as a man makes progress towards moral perfection, the instinctive sense, by which he detects in himself, the slightest deviations from such perfection, becomes more and more acute”.⁵ That is to say, the man who feels himself the chief of sinners is the holiest man. Such teaching as this is neither Christian nor Pagan. In the heathen classics we find no such consciousness

⁴Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 50. Cf. also *The Sacred Books of the East*.—The Upanishads, Khand. 8, 1, 5; Kath., 2, 5, 11. ⁵Quoted by Godet in his *Defence of the Faith*.

of sin, and for this, Theodore Parker once cried, "God be thanked".⁶ They were conscious of sins, but they had not that mediæval self-distrust and suspicion which "humbly" declared that we were "worms" in the eyes of Jehovah. With them "there was no room for an abiding sense of sin or unworthiness * * * men were satisfied with the gods and they felt the gods were satisfied with them".⁷ "The pagan philosopher", says Lecky, "had his eye fixed upon virtue, while the eye of the Christian teacher was upon sin." But, although the eye of the Christian teacher was fixed upon sin, it does not appear to have been a part of the Christianity of the Gospels. There the good life is emphasized and those who are bearing about with them a sense of their sinfulness are sent to a brighter, better life by the word, "Thy sins are forgiven thee", the implication being that you have no need to think any more about them.⁸

It is this, worse than pagan emphasis on a man's sin that has made the struggle for a religion of healthy-mindedness so difficult. It is this that has so long held and yet holds, so many thousands in the power of the priest. Auricular confession is a cornerstone of the Roman Church.

⁶John Weiss, *Life of Th. Parker*, i: 152. ⁷Prof. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*, 132. ⁸Cf. a fuller statement of this by the author in the *Hibbert Journal*, vol. v. p. 600

The man who sincerely calls himself God's "vile worm", or "miserable sinner", will seldom find it easy to raise himself above his own estimation. Humility is never under-estimation, but just estimation. "Think evil of your neighbor and the likelihood is that he will become all you think him." So, also, is it concerning yourself. "Evil to him who evil thinks."

The healthy nature of our modern views of sin is an extending healthiness. All the churches are being stimulated to a freer and brighter atmosphere. The Methodists have practically ceased to use their "penitent-forms", and ministers no longer bewail their sinful condition from the pulpits, the experiences of "Grace Abounding" are becoming rarer and are by no means characteristic of the modern church. Our modern saints, —all more or less influenced by the teaching of evolution—no longer think that sin is the damning thing that in years past was the subject of so many earnest fiery discourses. To-day we judge "that it is *not* likely that a Deity operating through a process of evolution can feel wrath at the blind efforts of his creatures struggling upward in the mire". We judge rather that "the human impulse to lend them a pitiful and helpful hand can with difficulty be restrained, can, indeed, only be restrained by lofty and far-seeing wis-

dom, and by perception of 'the far-off interest of tears' ".⁹ The point that concerns us to-day is not that men "gang a kennie wrang", but "the moving, why they do it",¹⁰ and every answer to our inquiry leaves us more merciful, and less inclined to judge a man from the darker side of his life.

This feeling that we possess for each other is God's feeling for all. Man's forgiveness is God's forgiveness. The "Son of Man" not only in the particular sense; but in the universal sense of the phrase, has power on earth to forgive sins. Sin never yet has hurt any God, but the God in human life, and this God is the only God whose forgiveness one needs to seek. "To err is human" and to forgive is also human. Healthy religion emphasizes not the means, but the end, not the sins, but the ideals and says,

"What if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes, and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again.
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
* * * *

No sooner the old hope goes to ground,
Than a new one straight to the selfsame mark
I shape me—
Ever
Removed.'"¹¹

⁹Sir O. Lodge, *Hibbert Journal*, vol. iii. p. 12. .¹⁰R. Burns, "Unco Guid."

¹¹R. Browning, "Life in a Love,"

It may be well at this point to warn against the other extreme of that which we have just combatted, which is fully as unhealthy in its nature. If the God of the past has been tyrannical and exacting, the God of the present is to some, far too familiar. We refer to the sickly sentimentality that in declaring God is Love, thinks of the mawkish affection that sometimes in human relationships passes under the name of love. It is this kind of love that makes George Bernard Shaw¹² say that he prefers the word "life" to express that for which "love" is made to do service. That he is justified in discarding the word "love" is questionable, for there are few words that are free from abuse; certainly the word "life" is not free. We, therefore, continue to use the word "love" and when speaking of it we never mean anything akin to the disgusting sentiment expressed by a lady once to Professor James and which he has quoted as a note to his citation from Francis W. Newman.¹³ We are the children of God, not the dolls of God, and a sane religion demands that love and honor be combined. A healthy religion is essentially monistic in its view of life. It not only knows nothing of the dualism that speaks of a God and a devil, but

¹²Lecture on the Religion of the British Empire. ¹³*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 81.

it is equally against the dualism that speaks of divine and human, sacred and secular. Because it believes in a spiritual universe, it believes in a free man, bound by no outward commandment, but forever declaring by his life, "all things are lawful to me." A healthy religion is able to justify the truth of the easily abused words of Augustine, that "if you love you may do as you incline". It never asks "what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" but declares that the world and the soul belong to one category and that every man's duty is to gain his soul by gaining the world. It never says that he who loves the world, its riches and pleasures, cannot have the love of the Father dwelling in him, but affirms that riches and pleasures are the gifts of God, provided, they are obtained honestly and used rightly, that to gain the world is to be its master, and the man who is master of these things and not tempted to wrong by them is a stronger man by far than he who turns his back on them and flees from them as from God-accursed things. All things are ours, and man, who man would be, must rule.

Akin to this monistic healthy-mindedness is another, to which we might attach the adjective, stoic. It assumes the essential goodness of the world-purpose and believes that the whole is so

organized as ultimately to vindicate righteousness. Much of the unhealthy condition of our religious life is caused by the fears we allow to control our minds with regard to trouble, pain and death. No trouble does us so much harm as the one we are always expecting, but which never comes. If "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof", we have not all learnt it yet, for so continually do we fail to show ourselves masters of our circumstances. We neglect our Marcus Aurelius too much. "Why should any of these things that happen externally, distract thee?" "Nothing that is in accordance with nature, is evil." "No man can hinder thee to live as thy nature doth require. Nothing can happen unto thee, but what the common good of nature doth require." "Do nothing against thy will * * * let thy God that is in thee to rule thee, find by thee, that he hath to do with a MAN."¹⁴

It all amounts to this, that the best way to possess a bright, healthy, sane religion, is to fling oneself on the hope of the essential goodness of the world, not caring whether we sink or swim, but just doing our duty to all and to ourselves. The world is ours, and the fulness thereof, and we belong to the world. We are the children of Nature and thus in the very best sense the children of God.

¹⁴Marcus Aurelius, Antoninus, *Meditations*, ii: 4; ii: 15; vi: 53; iii: 5, trans. Casaubon.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEROISM.

"Paradise is under the shadow of swords."—*Mahomet.*

"Always do what you are afraid to do."—*Mary M. Emerson.*

"Ancestral evolution has made us all potential warriors."—*W. James.*

The central thought of this chapter has already in an earlier part of the book been suggested.¹ For when we spoke of the virtues won in primeval forest and on raging seas, and attributed to the early fathers of our race, part of the glory for our present unconquerable energy, we were but anticipating an element of modern religion that we hoped later to write of more fully.

We cannot deny the rock from which we have been hewn. We are the children of hunters and vikings, and the iron has been in our blood for centuries. Were we the children of the East instead of the Northern West, we might have written the Upanishads and under an Indian sun dreamed of a heaven devoid of personal energy and longed only for Nirvana. But, being what we are, with our blood ever tingling at the war blast, our hearts ever thrilled by victory, the

¹Cf. chap. vii.

stern wide-awake voice of heroic religion appeals more strongly to us.

It is a matter for shame that much of the present-day religion fails to reach the heroic within us. Christianity is often propagated by men, who, in their meetings for the revival of religion, demand that every one of their audience shall close their eyes, that converts, without embarrassment, may give some sign of their willingness to "steal away to Jesus". It is not thus that heroes are found, and Julian's cry, "Thou hast conquered, O, Galilean!" is seldom heard under such conditions. Heroism is a constituent part of all the best modern religion. It is based upon the instinct that refuses to affirm anything but the trustworthiness and essential goodness of the cosmic process.

The old dualism interpreted the cosmic process as an unseen enemy that was forever antagonizing the highest interests of the life of good will. Scientists who have "an abiding and keen consciousness of the darker side of the world process", do not always find it easy to arrive at a consistent monism. They feel that "the darker side" is a constant challenge to their ethical positions. Huxley, in his "Ethics and Evolution" can here provide us with an illustration of one not absolutely free from the old dualism. He

there says, "Let us understand once for all that the ethical progress of society, depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in *combating* it". Such an attitude as this seems to assume that the cosmic process is against our ethics, whereas, if our monism and our experience be worth anything, it contributes to our life a very important element. The cosmic process may appear before us as a "beautiful enemy, untamable", but it exists to call forth the heroic in our nature.

Every time that "things seen" declare to us

" 'tis in our power to hang ye"

we are so made that our reply ever is,

"Very likely,

'Tis in our powers, then, to be hanged"

and turn the very hanging into life for the soul. If the seeming dualism about us is to pass away in the thought of men it will only be because their monism absorbs it. "The beautiful souls of the world have an art of saintly alchemy, by which bitterness is converted into kindness, the gall of human experience into gentleness, ingratitude into benefits, insults into pardon".² It is this transforming power of the human spirit that enables us to meet pain and poverty, shipwreck and fire, plague and earthquake and every form of

²Amiel, *Journal Intime*, 147.

death with calm heroism. We assume the reality of things we cannot prove and without flinching or hesitation we will "stand by our guns". It often involves a struggle, but there is no bitterness, and our monism ever rejoices when our "beautiful enemy" is serving us by paying tribute to the God of our hearts. Heroism is needed to guard the postulates of the soul, and defend them from the dominion of the facts of experience. We can say with Huxley that the ethical progress of society does not depend upon imitating the cosmic process, nor in running away from it. We differ from him when we affirm that such a progress does not even depend on combating the cosmic process, but upon utilizing it. We accept it as part of our law of growth, and know that the harvest we reap from our effort to use nature far transcends anything that could come from mere fighting.

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids not sit nor stand but
go."

It is because this heroic element in true religion is so seldom dwelt upon to-day that men and women of robust nature are repulsed by the sermons that preach a love to the point of nausea. It is our right, however, that our religion should be heroic. Is not the courage that will

dare and die for higher ideals, an element of human nature, contemporary ever with human life? That some of its earliest forms were brutal and savage does not condemn it; such a past but calls the louder for a nobler present and a yet nobler future. The mawkish, the whining, the fretful and the pining must pass from our religion; and the strong love and heroic trust of souls made to be mighty must be ours.

“Cease your fretful prayers,
Your whinings and your tame petitions:
The gods love courage armed with confidence
And prayers fit to pull them down. Weak tears
And troubled hearts, the dull twins of cold
spirits
They sit and smile at.”³

We hear to-day many laments over the militarism that neither Hague Conferences nor peace sermons can abolish. As it belongs to that part of the spirit of man which we are now considering, it may be well for us to give it some attention. It seems to us that until it is realized that “the beauty of war is, that it is so congruous with ordinary human nature”⁴ shall we ever lose the immorality of the war spirit. “What we need”, writes Professor James, who has seen this truth, “is to discover in the social realm the moral

³Beaumont Fletcher's "Bonduca."

⁴W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 366.

equivalent of war, something heroic that will speak to man as universally as war does". As such a moral equivalent he suggests the worship of poverty. This is because he "sees the way in which wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation". Such a heroism would fail in its first conditions, however, instead of appealing to man "as universally as war does", it would only prosper in those warmer climes where like Brother Francis, men could "content themselves with a tunic, patched within and without, a cord and breeches and desire nothing more."⁵

What seems to fill the need better does not necessarily exclude the strenuous ideal of Professor James, but rather absorbs it in a larger one. It has also the advantage of appealing to a true instinct of our nature, namely, our affirmation of goodness as the highest rule of life. Our struggle is not with riches only, but with all that stands for the affirmation of the reality of phenomena. Our military courage must be transferred into moral courage and only when we have battled with "things seen" and subordinated them to things unseen, shall we succeed in placing the good

⁵The last Will and Testament of Brother Francis," trans. in Sabatier's *St. Francis of Assisi*.

God of our hearts upon the throne of the universe.

The war spirit cannot be abolished, it must be turned upon the right objects. The struggle for existence has left its mark upon us. Every battle song keeps time with the throb of our hearts, its spirit witnesses with our spirit, that we are the children of war. Every one of us to-day feels that life is only worthy of the name of life when it is the result of struggle and conflict. Even the warfare of nations has had its place in the evolution of the race, and no peace proposals will succeed that ignore the blessings of battle. "The common notion that peace and the common virtues of civil life flourished together, I found", says Ruskin, "to be wholly untenable. Peace and the *vices* of civil life only flourish together. We talk of peace and learning, and of peace and plenty, and of peace and civilization, but I found that those were not the words that the muse of history coupled together, that on her lips the words were—peace and sensuality,—peace and selfishness,—peace and death. I found, in brief, that all great nations learned their truth of word, their strength of thought in war; that they were nourished in war and wasted in peace, taught by war and deceived by peace, trained by war and betrayed by peace, in a word, they were born in war

and expired in peace."⁶ Such is the verdict, not of a bloodthirsty man, but of one of the greatest prophets of last century, and not only does history confirm his interpretation, but from every truly manly and womanly heart there comes a response of acquiescence, we *know* that he is right.

Whatever Ruskin has coupled with peace, will be found with the religion of peace, that is, with the religion of compromise. The grandest and greatest days of church history were the days of persecution and martyrdom, when men thought that this earth was not large enough for Christ and Caesar and one of them had to go. It was then that moral courage and military courage came face to face and victory was to the former. "The very swords, themselves," says Eusebius, "at length became blunt and broken, being worn out with use. The executioners grew weary and gave over their functions; but the Christians till the last breath of their life, sang songs of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God."

The most shameful days of church history were the days when all men spoke well of her. It was in her days of peace that conduct became creed. Loss of battle meant then and always will mean loss of life. If we have surrendered the dualism of Church and World, if to-day we fight not to

⁶*Crown of Wild Olives. Essay on War.*

slay but to conquer, not to abolish but to absorb let us not forget that it was by the signs of war and the heroism of its spirit that good has ever triumphed over evil. If the Smithfield fires will never be relighted, if the New England tragedies of Cotton Mather's day are never to be seen again, let us possess ourselves of a religion of hard and simple living and of strenuous warfare for a good life. When we pray, if we pray at all, let us plead for no escape from life, but nobly ask "Lead us into temptation and out again the stronger, lead us where the gale is fiercest and the battle longest that we may have the joy of victory, the strength of men and the glory of gods".

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond the place of wrath and tears,
Looms but the horror of the shade;
And yet the menace of the years,
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll:
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.'"

W. E. Henley.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEATHLESS LIFE.

"When we die, we shall find that we have not lost our dreams
we have only lost our sleep."—*J. P. Richter.*

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:

Thou madest man, he knows not why;

He thinks he was not made to die;

And thou hast made him: thou art just.—*Tennyson.*

"We dream alone, we suffer alone, we die alone."¹ The last lone task is for many the hardest. The end of the journey is hid from our view and is approached with dread by many. It is said the unknown is always an object of dread to us, but this is not true, for it is possible always to have towards it the attitude of trust. When dogmatism has passed from us, so that with regard to the great undemonstrated truths of religion we can no longer arrogantly affirm or deny, the positive and negative attitudes left to us take the form of trust or dread. To those who deepest think and wisest live, the former is ever the choice. It is the good man who robs death of its terror.

It is to be regretted that large masses of people yet possess religious conceptions that hinder the emancipation of the soul from the fear of death.

¹Amiel, *Journal Intime*, Jan. 31, 1881.

Death is given an importance which does not belong to it, and this emphasis is largely responsible for much of the fear and morbidity that makes the lives of many a slavery. Wherever death is thought of as the end of one career and the beginning of another and not as an event in a career, the soul fears to pass through its gates.

The fear of death is not professedly a Christian feeling. The New Testament cry, "O, death, where is thy sting!" is said to be most characteristic of the effect of the Christian religion. As a matter of fact, however, such a fear plays a large part in the feelings of average Christian people. When death is made to fix the character of each individual, and the assurances of salvation made dependent upon a subjective realization of the fact it is no wonder that even a Bishop Butler should fear to die, and many a more ordinary soul should pass away in doubt and darkness.

The Christian fear of death, however, is an interpolation into history. When the Christian Fathers began to proclaim "that not only all pagans but also all Jews, heretics and schismatics who depart from this present life outside the Catholic Church are about to go into eternal fire",² the great teachers of the pagan world were

²St. Fulgentius: *De Fide*, §81.

cherishing the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and calling upon men to meet death calmly and with confidence. The nature of man was developing in a natural way, all who had obeyed in life were learning to obey her in death. Death was only thought of unnaturally when dogmas of heaven and hell and of future reward and punishment, clouded the sun that was rising in their skies. Luther's jibe³ about a heathen dying calmly because he was ignorant of death being God's wrath, is pitiable and also sad because it is yet the thought of those who narrowly hold to the letter of the Bible. It is sufficient to say that we shall remember the grand death of noble Socrates, far longer than any such opinion of Luther's.

To the ancient, death was a natural event and was never feared. Men went about their duties and to die was their last. It was seldom anticipated; "I wish to be surprised by disease and death", said Epictetus. It was only when death received a theological importance that men began to prepare for death as for some dread exacting foe.

Recently, through our fuller knowledge of the East, this calm and even cheerful relation to

³Cf. Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism*, etc., vol. i: 379, Note.

death, has been exemplified to us by the Japanese. It has in the past been customary to pity the Buddhist, because of what *we* thought his terrible conception of an after-life. But, apparently, there exists no fear in death to the real Buddhist. If anyone's death on earth is devoid of the sense of loneliness, it is the Buddhist's. "The sense of obligation to some kind of 'not-self' is being wrought into the fibre of the Japanese race,"⁴ so that each man feels that his death is in the presence of all who have passed to the All. /

Because of their firm belief that they are members one of another and that none liveth to themselves and none dieth to themselves, "they are not disturbed at the moment of death, but calmly meet the end of life and let the world-destiny accomplish the purpose it may have in view. This emancipation from individualistic limitations seems to have largely contributed to the perfection of their military culture, known as Bushido. Old Jananese soldiers, nobles and men of letters displayed an almost gay cheerfulness even in the most critical moments of life, facing death unflinchingly, sometimes even with mirth."⁵ Here the Buddhist can teach the Christian, indeed, can instruct us all, for this brave, sane attitude to-

⁴*Hibbert Journal*, iv: 34.

⁵Right Rev. Soyen Shaku; cf *Open Court*, vol. xxi, p. 204; and *The Monist*, vol. xvii, p. 1.

wards death is our right, and although it is a pilfered inheritance, pilfered by a mediæval religion, we shall regain it and no longer fear what our Gothic forefathers bravely met.

It is our purpose in this chapter honestly to face the facts about death and immortality in the hope that we may aid some to see the stars shine through their cypress trees.

It is very frequent in these days of rationalism to hear men and women say that they do not believe in immortality, that all will end with the brain and be resolved again into nature. It is certain that those who talk thus have the word of physical science with them. Man is certainly not an exception, from all that we see, to the general law of dissolution. "For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, * * * all go unto one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again."⁶

Let us assume the truth of this position that we may face the worst that can happen and let us see if the value is taken from our present life, and death made an unbearable thought. That some value might possibly pass out of life is true. But recently we have been reminded by the Eng-

⁶Ecc. iii: 19, 20.

lish pragmatist, Dr. Schiller that, "The ordinary conduct of men affords but little support for the notion that their life is a constant meditation upon death, tempered by the joyful anticipation of immortality." This forbids us to think that the general acceptance of the fact of human mortality, would affect the majority of the world very much. It is not an unlikely thought to some minds that if such a thing should come to pass, duty would no longer be an obligation to us, and the world thus go to riot and ruin.⁸ But here, again, the very opposite might prove to be the truth. "It is conceivable", writes George Eliot, "that in some minds the deep pathos lying in the thought of human mortality—that we are here for a little while and then vanish away, that this earthly life is all that is given to our loved ones and to our many suffering fellow-men—lies nearer the foundations of moral emotion than the conception of extended existence." It is certain that there are many faithful souls who bend to the toil of life, spending and being spent on behalf of their fellows with very little motive beyond the thought that the day is far spent and the night

⁷*Humanism*, p. 231. ⁸Mr Guy Thorne supposes such an effect upon society if it were demonstrated that Jesus did not rise from the dead! cf. his *When it was Dark*.

cometh wherein no one can work. If Francis Xavier can love and do good,

“Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Or seeking a reward”,

then it is inconceivable that men and women of a wiser age cannot live the life of good-will without the support of the doctrine of immortality.

In the second place, to say that the thought of death in the sense of annihilation is a horrible thought, from which we revolt, is to contradict the experience of many. We do not think that we are assuming too much when we say that there are thousands of men and women living to-day to whom the thought of continued existence is a burden, who would rejoice to know that death really did end all. The disbeliever in the immortality of the soul has nothing to make his prospect less cheerful than the Christian. “We are free from anxiety regarding the terrible fate”, says one, “that some of our Christian brethren yet hold over us; but in place of their anxiety concerning an eternal after-life, which may be blissful or may be gruesome, the worst we expect is eternal peace—an undisturbed sleep, such as

we hope for every night when we retire to rest”⁹

“And if there be no meeting past the grave,
If all is darkness, silence, yet ’tis rest;
Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
For God still ‘giveth His beloved sleep’,
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.”¹⁰

All this tells us that if we look for the worst to happen, our hearts need not to be afraid. The heart that has been schooled to receive with cheer the inevitable, that believes that what is to be, will be, and what will be, will be for the best, is little disturbed about the nature or even the reality of the hereafter. This, then, is our conclusion, as far as we have yet gone, that we should not be disturbed if it were placed beyond dispute tomorrow, that immortality is a false dream, and altogether non-existent. The foundations of our life go deeper than a belief in immortality.

Yet are there not any foundations as deep for immortality as there are for belief in the value of a good life? Has it yet been proved beyond dispute that the life of good-will is the right kind of life for us to live? Is not ethicism as much an idealism as religion? Does not the ethicist also believe where he cannot prove? It seems to us that the man who sincerely lives the good life

⁹Vivian, *Churches and Modern Thought*, p. 355. ¹⁰Browning’s Funeral,” a poem by Mrs. Huxley. The last three lines were inscribed, at Prof. Huxley’s request, on his grave-stone.

and the man who thinks his good life eternal are both in the same boat.

We are willing to grant that immortality cannot be proved from visions, the hearing of voices, spiritualism and Bible legends, we are even willing to admit that the mere desire for immortality is no proof thereof. We may surrender all our so-called "proofs" and yet have as much reason for belief in it as we have for living the good life. If we think of the good life and God without proof, why not immortality? Do we live by proof or instinct? The fact is, that men have never waited for the proof of eternal life; or if it be contended that the ancients thought they had sufficient proof, there are not wanting thousands of men to-day, shrewd and critical by nature, who are willing to accept it without proof. "It is to a thinking being quite impossible to think himself non-existent: ceasing to think and to live."¹¹ We carry within ourselves our reasons for thinking we were not made to die; it is the man who lives deepest who thinks he will live forever. Even as the ethicist has a growing conviction as he lives his good life, that his rule of life is in harmony with the ultimate reality, so the believer in the immortality of the soul has a

¹¹Goethe, quoted by Emerson *Works*, vol. iii, 364 (York Library Edition).

growing conviction as he lives his good life that three score years and ten will not hold him, that his growing powers demand growing years and that the only explanation of a life that grows is that it was intended to grow and grow to perfection, which itself is eternal growth. In religion we identify ourselves with the totality of all being and deep in our nature is the feeling that God is our Home, from Him we come and to Him we go. "The soul is not born; it does not die; it was not produced from any one. Nor was any one produced from it. Unborn, eternal, it is not slain. * * * The soul cannot be gained by knowledge, not by understanding, not by manifold science. * * * It reveals its own truths."¹² We might well add, if Brahm is eternal, and Brahm and âtman are One, mortality is illusion (maya). Some like to go farther and describe the future. Wherever the soul has been believed immortal, man has undertaken to fill his heaven with the fulfilment of almost every earthly desire. Thus, there have been golden cities, and happy hunting grounds, starry flights and visions of "dark-eyed damsels". Many have followed Milton and asked,

"What if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein

¹²Buddhist Scriptures.

Each to other like, more than on Earth is thought!"

Swedenborg, far more than any other, has followed this analogy, and Emerson, himself an admirer of Swedenborg, was fascinated so that he wrote, "We shall pass to the future existence as we enter into an agreeable dream. *All nature* will accompany us there."¹³ To most of us however, such detailed fancies will ever appear childish and unnecessary, the soul prefers trust to vision and patience to hasty speculation.

Immortality is one of our natural dreams, and although the dogmatic religionist laughs at such a suggestion, and demands a wide-awake miraculous revelation, the natural soul is content to say,

"Yet in my dreams I'd be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, to Thee."

The dream that nearly every one dreams can hardly fail us. At any rate, we are willing while we have to assume the reality of so much in life, to also assume the reality of nature's great dream. Our limitations keep us humble. We know that, though "so runs" our dream, we are like the

"infant crying in the night,
* * * crying for a light,
And with no language but a cry;"

¹³*Works*, III, 354.

Yet we cannot end on such a note, for our whole nature was made for the light. We cannot end where we begun. The darkness is going, religions are passing away, external authorities are being laid aside as out-worn crutches and apologetics are lying dusty on the shelves. Already over the hills are the first rays of dawn; already the feet are upon the mountains of the heralds of the universal good tidings; the messengers of a natural religion born in the heart of man, but of the seed of God; already the great dream of nature is passing round the world that all men may awake without surprise to the toil and life of the day that never ends.

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